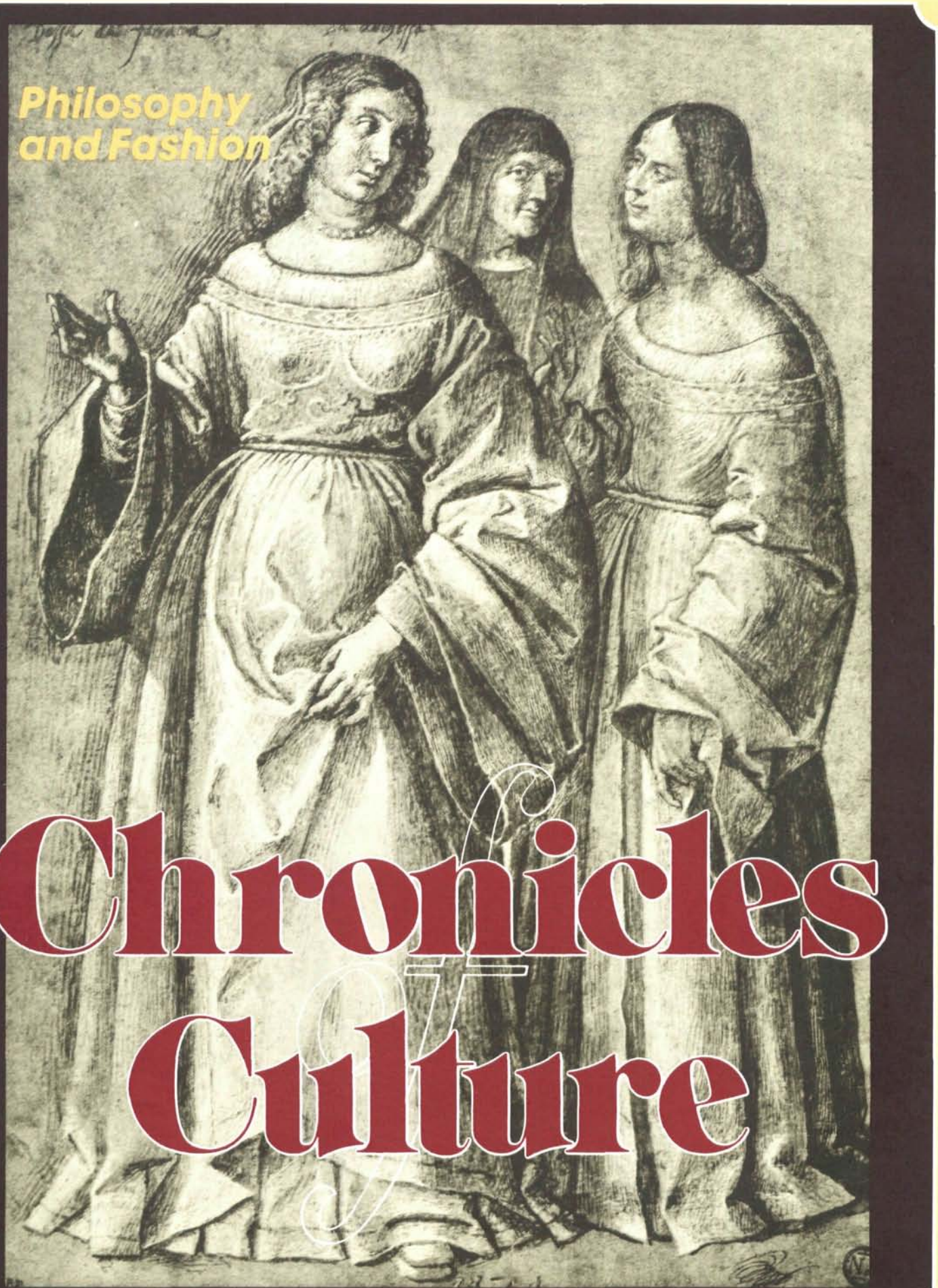


# Chronicles of Culture

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# Philosophy and Fashion

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## COMMENT

There are few things in this world more irritating than being told by a salesman in a men's store that a particular style of dress is all the fashion. I am the sort who, lacking the necessary discrimination and money to be sartorially resplendent, adopts a superior attitude toward those who seem always to know whether or not stripes are in for the season. The kind who, while all around me discuss the latest outrage uncovered by Mike Wallace, takes pride in never having viewed *60 Minutes.* And when it comes to ideas, I maintain an even tougher line, stubbornly refusing to read books by those about whom everyone is talking. Much of this, I may as well confess, can be dismissed as a pose, a slightly comic effort to call attention to what I should like people to think is a courageous independence. Nevertheless, there is something to be said for a critical attitude toward fashion, particularly when one enters the sacred groves of philosophy.

One might think that philosophy would be relatively immune to fashion, focusing, one supposes, on eternal verities, or at least on timeless wisdom. Yet modern philosophers have been as subject to the imperatives of novelty as have those who determine the length of the skirt and the depth of the décolletage. It is a rare thinker who has not had thoughts that were, at different times, in and out of season. "I long ago renounced the approbation of my contemporaries," Schopenhauer wrote in 1844. Twenty-five years earlier, when he published *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,* he had been unable to unseat Hegel, "that intellectual Caliban," from Germany's philosophic throne. Later, however, when Hegel was no longer fashionable and Weltschmerz had become the mark of an up-to-date sensibility, the great pessimist's ideas attracted serious attention.

But perhaps it is not quite fair, or even accurate, to describe Hegel as "fashionable." He was, after all, a thinker of perennial relevance and, during the first half of the 19th century, his philosophy was more than a fashion—it was an orthodoxy. In much the same way, it would be misleading to characterize contemporary analytic philosophy as a momentary enthusiasm; it has served for some time now as Anglo-American academia's philosophic orthodoxy. Moreover, its high priest, Ludwig Wittgenstein, was a thinker of such power and originality that he is unlikely to become what Merleau-Ponty once called a philosophic "museum piece."

Fashionable philosophers are more likely to be those who flash across the sky and then disappear from view. More the reflectors of their society than its creators, they are forever identified with a particular historical moment. In our time, as Andy Warhol—who is quite familiar with temporary flashiness—once put it, *everyone* is famous for 10 minutes; thus, even philosophers, or those who imagine themselves to be philosophers, have sometimes become public celebrities, heroes to all who prefer inventive and provocative fashion to basic blue.

Since the end of World War II, Western society has witnessed the rise and fall of a host of "public philosophers," including Jean-Paul Sartre, Herbert Marcuse, and Michel Foucault.

From the German surrender to the 1960's, Sartre was undoubtedly the most fashionable philosopher on both sides of the Atlantic. His major work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), is long and opaque, but even those who did not make their way through its labyrinthian pages sensed that it offered a nihilistic conception of man and freedom that paralleled the after-Auschwitz mood of the postwar world. In the wake of the nazi death camps, Western men experienced a deep sense of guilt and worthlessness; they were thus easily persuaded by Sartre that life was absurd and that human relationships were invariably exploitative and inauthentic. "Hell," Sartre wrote in *No Exit,* "is other people!" Few were inclined to take issue with him. Existential angst and "bad faith" became so fashionable that those who did not exhibit a furrowed brow or who were unable to toss off cynical remarks about life's emptiness were thought to be—indeed, thought themselves to be—pitiable philistines.

Everyone in those years was an existentialist, though few could provide a coherent account of what Sartre meant when he announced that existence was prior to essence. Even fewer were aware that the sage of the Left Bank had borrowed freely from two philosophers of stature: Husserl and Heidegger. It was a matter of image and publicity. Who could ignore Sartre, the courageous "resistance fighter," sitting alone in a Paris café, confronting the Void? His views on every conceivable question were passionately discussed and his nihilistic novels and dramas were mandatory reading for anyone who wished to be au courant.

But the apostle of anguish was a Parisian after all, and a Parisian is nothing if not fashion conscious. As despair and resignation threatened to become old hat, Sartre discovered



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Marxism, devoting the remainder of his life to the invention of an intoxicating brew of existentialism and political radicalism and to the celebration of anti-Western revolutions in the so-called Third World. During the last pathetic years of his life, the most famous French intellectual since Voltaire could often be found distributing Maoist leaflets on the streets of the fashion capital of the world.

Sartre's metamorphosis into a champion of the ideological left was genuine—perhaps I should say authentic—enough, but because of his existentialist past and the fashionmongers' short attention span, others with more impressive radical credentials and less familiar faces began to overtake him as philosophic trend-setters. As the 1960's advanced, one philosopher in particular became fashion's darling—Herbert Marcuse. A rather unlikely candidate for celebrity, Marcuse was born and educated in Germany, where he studied with the formidable Martin Heidegger. He emigrated when Hitler came to power, ending up in the United States, where he joined the Institute for Social Research, then just transplanted from Frankfurt to New York. Under Institute auspices, he began to concoct a peculiar mix of Hegel, Marx, and Freud. After a wartime tour of duty with the State Department's Office of Intelligence Research, Marcuse accepted a teaching position at Brandeis and established a solid, if quiet, reputation in leftist intellectual circles with books such as *Reason and Revolution, Soviet Marxism,* and *Eros and Civilization.* Then, quite suddenly, he was discovered and hailed as a prophet by "students" 40 years his junior. Like long hair and careless dress, he was all the rage.

Although Marcuse wrote an almost impenetrable Teutonic prose, his theories of "liberation" appealed to young radicals, some of whom bore an unmistakable resemblance to the Weimar youths he had once known. According to Marcuse, philosophy was criticism of existing reality; its task was to promote political and sexual "freedom" by unmasking a "system" that was, he argued in *One-Dimensional Man,* so sinister that it cunningly disguised its repressive nature and co-opted all potential critics. What appeared to be freedom was, in reality, servitude.

Taking his cue from a careless reading of Heidegger, Marcuse attacked technology and castigated the military as the preserve of madmen, who, were they sane, would be making love, not war in Vietnam. Because he encouraged and applauded the revolutionary worth of irresponsibility, young people attended his every word. He was photographed with intense-looking disciples, who, for once, were listening, not talking; his books were reprinted; books about him proliferated. Frank Kermode decided that he merited enshrinement in the "Modern Masters" series, though the distinguished critic had the good sense to assign the volume to Alasdair MacIntyre, who proceeded to deflate the silver-haired guru's prophetic pretensions.

Fortunately, the radical decade ran its course and the tiresome "revolution" was, at least for the time being, removed from the Western world's agenda. As a result, fashionable people began to cast about for a new guide to right thinking; they discovered him in the person of Michel Foucault, who became an intellectual sensation in the aftermath of the French "events of May 1968," as that breakdown of civilized behavior is often euphemistically described. Unlike the fevered advocates of total and immediate revolution, Foucault prophesied an arduous, piecemeal, and unending struggle for liberation. His was, and is, the perfect philosophy for chastened but unrepentant radicals.

At the center of Foucault's thought is his analysis of power, an analysis that eschews Marxist categories in favor of a panpotency inspired by Nietzsche's "will to power." According to Foucault, power is so all pervasive that it reaches into the very capillaries not only of the metaphorical social body, but of the actual body of every one of society's members. Since the 18th century, this penetration has been accomplished by ever more subtle, yet largely unpremeditated means. By substituting genealogical for his earlier archaeological investigations of the human sciences, Foucault intends to disclose how knowledge itself, in the guise of the various scientific "discourses," exercises a disciplinary power. In particular, he has been concerned with psychiatric, penal, and sexual discourses.

Although Foucault insists that he does not consider all networks of power to be repressive, his books, taken together, add up to a thoroughgoing indictment of Western society, in which, he maintains, the art of control by surveillance and categorization has been mastered. To be sure, he often speaks of power's positive, productive capacities, but this is by way of inspiring the victims of repression to institute a "non-disciplinary form of power." The ultimate political/social burden of his work is evident in the lengthy "discussion with Maoists" that serves as an introduction to *Power/Knowledge* and in his recent observation that the entire analytic of power could only begin "after 1968, that is to say on the basis of daily struggles at grass roots level, among those whose fight was located in the fine meshes of the web of power."

Foucault has repeatedly emphasized his fundamental differences with Sartre and Marcuse, but what the three men share is their common hatred of the West. They are convinced that what many believe is liberty is nothing but sham and deceit, a mask for a more refined and hence more efficient strategy of subjection. It is largely for this reason that they have all been cult figures. Among Western intellectuals, anti-Westernism is by now so deeply rooted that it is less a fashion than an orthodoxy.

*—Lee Congdon*

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# Discourse on a French Farrago

**Karlis Racevskis: *Michel Foucault and the Subversion of Intellect;* Cornell University Press; Ithaca, NY.**

**Charles C. Lemert and Garth Gillan: *Michel Foucault: Social Theory and Transgression;* Columbia University Press; New York.**

**Jonathan Culler: *Roland Barthes;* Oxford University Press; New York.**

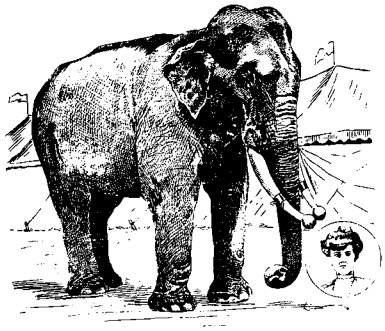
**Maurice Blanchot: *The Space of Literature;* University of Nebraska Press; Lincoln, NE.**

**by Gary S. Vasilash**

To get things off on the right foot, a passage from Boswell's *Life of Johnson* about an event of 1763 is in order:

> After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, 'I refute it *thus.*'

Several things can be gleaned, picked up, measured, and possibly assessed from the preceding about the Imaginary order (Racevskis: "the order in which the subject develops a consciousness centered in itself.... [I]t is the Imaginary that represents the fundamental and central structure of our experience") that has shaped my discourse. I admit that it is rather presumptuous to introduce myself blatantly into the text, but, as Foucault—historian, philosopher, all-around savant—says in "What Is an Author?" (in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice;* edited by Donald F. Bouchard; Cornell University Press, 1977), "Discourse that possesses an author's name is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten; neither is it accorded the momentary attention given to ordinary, fleeting words. Rather, its status and its manner of reception are regulated by the culture in which it circulates." Foucault looks forward to "a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author"; I don't. These unfleeting words may not carry any *truth* (i.e., Nietzsche, a favorite of Foucault, wrote: "The different languages, set side by side, show that what matters with words is never the truth, never an adequate expression," and Racevskis, who favors Foucault, writes, "the Imaginary mode of apprehending existence is fundamentally deceitful.... The Imaginary leads us to think that we are in full possession of our knowledge"), though I hope that they do. And if they do, there still exists a problem in getting a message across: Foucault might recommend that anyone studying them should skip the "meaning" of the string of signifiers. As he writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Pantheon, 1972), "discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe." Or, put more simply, skip the content and observe the form of the discourse



and all that surrounds it throughout the pages of the journal: that's where the *real* message can be located. Hopefully, some have stuck with me through this prologizing (certain author-response critics stress that an author cannot be too sure about his audience anymore) and will try to match up the presented signifiers with what they assume, guess, are my signifieds. Admittedly, this paragraph is rather crowded, prolix. It is so in honor of the subject. For example, Foucault, in the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* writes of "the cautious, stumbling manner of this text: at every turn it stands back, measures up what is before it, gropes towards its limits, stumbles against what it does not mean, and digs pits to mark out its own path." Getting over his potholes is a simple thing as compared to risking the chasms in the works of some of those who are presumably his explicators. Lemert and Gillan write about the practice of reading Foucault's writings: "We are obliged to transgress, to go beyond what we know, to let ourselves fall into the strangeness of his language and thought, and to wonder if what we are reading has any worth at all." The two men are certain that the answer to the final phrase is an affirmative one. By the time that they have traversed to the final page of the book, transgressed through the writings of Foucault, they announce:

> To write history is to wager against the possibility of error. But only to wager. Neither the philosophy of history overshadowed by the absolute nor historical relativism can understand these risks. But Foucault does. And this is simultaneously the strength and weakness of archaeological discourse. Violence is always an unstable action. All the more so is the violent act that transgresses the will to know, that breaks the spell of anthropological sleep, and that digs its own grave by creating a space to think.

Talk about digging graves.

*Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of* Chronicles of Culture.



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To return to the first sentence. The first thing that should be noted is the use of "right foot" instead of "left foot." Foucault tends to delve into (around?) subjects that are not widely noted and discussed because they are assumed to be of little import in the larger scheme of things; he has, it is clear, been influenced by the *Annales'* school of history. His response to the belittlement of the subjects/objects would probably be that the bourgeoisie has—because of the "institutional regime of the production of truth" *(Power/Knowledge,* Pantheon, 1980) that it has established—deemed such things insignificant for its own purposes. Its purposes are seemingly behind everything. For example, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (Pantheon, 1978), Foucault wonders whether the limits placed on sexual perversity, which had the effect of putting more emphasis on "genitally centered sexuality," weren't *really* established "to ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity, to perpetuate the forms of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative." This echoes a point he makes about the rise of the medical profession; Foucault, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* dates its advent at the end of the 18th century, "when the health of population became one of the economic norms required by industrial societies." Laws against performing bizarre sex acts and the "clinical gaze" are both widely, tacitly accepted in Western societies. *That's* the problem, maintains Foucault. So, taking his approach, one might conclude that the orientation of the pedestrian metaphor is actually a politically motivated trope (i.e., harking back to French parliamentary seating in the early 19th century) that, through the subtle, insidious effects of the power-knowledge dominance of the bourgeoisie, has become a tropism.

Secondly, there is reference to Boswell and Johnson: two proper names, two authors. Writes Foucault in "What Is an Author?": "The author's name is not a function of a man's civil status, nor is it fictional; it is situated in the breach, among the discontinuities, which gives rise to new groups of discourse and their singular mode of existence." (Bouchard, editor of *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice,* provides a footnote for that sentence which opens, "This is a particularly important point and brings together a great many of Foucault's insights concerning the relationship of an author (subject) to discourse." Indeed.) While the names "Boswell" and "Johnson" have, in this case, given rise to a new discourse, they have done significantly more than sit in a breach waiting to be reclaimed, disinterred in a text. Actually, the use of the citation for Boswell's book, as well as the use of citations for the various books by Foucault quoted herein, betrays my unFoucaultian approach. Write Lemert and Gillan about his approach: "Documentation is used parsimoniously . . . . Even though . . . dates are crucial they are seldom provided in the text. The reader must check them, usually in a bibliography, often by consulting an encyclopedia. The reader is forced to do his own work." Shouldn't that read "Foucault's work"? After all, the reader going to Foucault is presumably doing so in order to become enlightened, or at least to gain some insights about the particular historical events, discontinuities, subjects. However, what unsuspecting readers may not realize is that Foucault works to void such things of their "accepted" meanings.

For example, the archaeological metaphor is a misleading one; very important aspects of the conventional science are neglected. One of the reasons why Foucault uses it is to differentiate his procedure from that of those historians who use a linear approach to organization. In a linear scheme there must be, by definition, connective elements between points. Foucault thinks that such syntheses can be false, misleading. He stresses the importance of disruptions, discrete objects; all of his scientific baggage notwithstanding, Foucault loves the fragment as much as the 19th-century Romantics did. Historians using the more conventional linear approach, of course, tend to analyze the *meaning* of, say, discourses. As pointed out, Foucault concentrates not on what the discourse *says,* but rather on the environment, the surroundings, the position in which it is located. He seems to ask, "What makes this particular item possible?" The archaeological metaphor works, then, in two ways. First, archaeologists on a dig will tend to find (i.e., except in very disruptive circumstances, like Pompeii) isolated objects within the strata that they penetrate. Thus, Foucault's emphasis on the disruptive, singular, makes sense. Second, said archaeologists upon finding, say, a bowl, would make careful notations of spatial coordinates and all other relevant details that describe the ecology. But archaeology doesn't stop there, though Foucault does. That is, says Racevskis, "An archaeological analysis will . . . concern itself with a 'field of dispersion,' with the reality of things that are written and articulated, but it will consider them at the level that reveals their existence as singular discursive events, not as signs that stand for something else."

The situation, then, is this: Foucault the archaeologist spends his time puttering around in a field with calipers, a spade, and a tape measure. Once he finds a bowl, he examines the surrounding dirt, rocks, and vegetation and tries to figure out what makes it possible for the bowl to exist in its particular position. Another archaeologist comes up to the site and removes the bowl; his objective is to subject the bowl to further analysis. Foucault observes the hole. Later, after a great deal of pondering, he announces the existence of the hole. People ask him for more information about his find. "Measure it yourself," is the curt response. Foucault is busy with another pockmark.

Finally, the selection of Johnson must be accounted for. Johnson is certainly one of the great figures of 18th-century literature, a very *moral* writer, given the generally accepted definition of that ad-



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jective (e.g., Johnson, according to Boswell, on Rousseau: "Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations"). Johnson is a support of the structure of Western civilization. Writes Racevskis, "Foucault . . . intends to disrupt the power mechanisms that obtain in Western societies." Such power mechanisms —things like humanistic and scientific discourses, which Racevskis calls "the principal modes of domination and subjection in Western societies"—are used to claim that certain things are good and others bad, some things diseased and others healthy. All of this is inverted in Foucault's approach. He seems to have an attachment for all of those outside of the structure: the mad, the criminal, the sexually deviant. Thus, in his terms, Sade would be a more appropriate referent from the 18th century. Foucault grants Sade a great deal of respect, which is curious, given Foucault's comment about the "writer" in "Language to Infinity": "If we asked to whom the words of Sade were addressed (and address themselves today), there is only one answer: no one." Given Foucault's answer and the notion that literature is supposed to convey at least a modicum of meaning to another person (the old Jakobsonian author to reader), Foucault's iconoclastic allusiveness begins to appear in another guise: as pseudosophisticated nonsense.

Johnson and that particular episode were selected for the first paragraph for one reason: to make the point that certain intellectuals deserve a well-placed, physical or metaphysical, kick instead of fawning adulation.

While such blows would undoubtedly be an unexpected disruption, there is a more ominous threat looming. To be a French intellectual in the late 20th century means to risk the enmity of motor vehicles. Think of Camus. Notes Jonathan Culler in his workmanlike, succinct, valuable introduction to *Roland Barthes,* "in February 1980, coming out of a luncheon with socialist politicians and intellectuals, Barthes was knocked down by a laundry truck while crossing the street in front of the Collège de France." Barthes died one month later. Is it tasteless to be so flippant about men, in Tennyson's phrase, "crossing the bar," or in Foucault's, "transgressing the limit"? Yes and no. Yes for most civilized people. No for French (and now American) intellectuals who, in Blanchot's formulation, are concerned with "death's space."

Maurice Blanchot is a French writer who is little known in this country, though he made minor waves in France: Barthes, for example, used him in *Writing Degree Zero,* a book in which, as Culler describes, Barthes takes on the old guard: Sartre. The recent once-swelling tidal wave of interest in all things French that engulfed select American academics caused Blanchot to be hoisted in essays by the likes of Edward Said (a man who is very obsequious to Foucault in his *Orientalism* [Pantheon, 1978]). *The Space of Literature* was originally published in 1955 by Gallimard as *L'Espace littéraire.* The translation should cause a ripple around those who, like Lemert and Gillan, have fallen "into the strangeness of [Foucault's] language and thought." For example, the first sentence of Foucault's "Language to Infinity" is: "Writing so as not to die, as Blanchot said, or perhaps even speaking so as not to die is a task undoubtedly as old as the word." "Writing so as not to die" is a major concern for Blanchot; his essays—to define them in a generous manner—become rather funereal as he presents Kafka, Rilke, and others vigorously, sullenly, scribbling away so that they will transgress death's limit, leave a monument beyond their corporeal existence. However, this isn't exactly the same thing as drawing up a will; those involved in the task, if Blanchot is correct, are terminal adherents to something along the lines of Sacher-Masoch. That is, Blanchot rhetorically queries: "For isn't the writer dead as soon as the work exists?" *Work,* of course, means *complete* work: no one is done until he is done. That is a rather banal observation, yet it seems that cryptically clothed banality is in vogue nowadays and is to be accepted *à bouche bée.* □

# Waiting for Locusts

**William Kennedy: *Ironweed;* Viking Press; New York.**

**by Stephen L. Tanner**

William Kennedy is putting Albany on the literary map. *Ironweed* is the third in a cycle of novels treating his home town, a trilogy Saul Bellow has called "memorable" and "distinguished." The May issue of *The Atlantic* contains Kennedy's article on Nelson Rockefeller's Albany Mall. That is the ostensible subject; the article is really about the kind of city history and colorful characters that go into his novels. His work of nonfiction *O Albany!* is scheduled for fall.

It is the underside of Albany life during the 1930's that most interests Kennedy. His novels are peopled with gangsters, whores, show girls, pool hustlers, gamblers, bookmakers, bartenders, barflies, bums, cogs in the corrupt political machine, and newspapermen at home in such company. More respectable members of the Irish Catholic community appear, though only on the fringes. Family relationships, particularly between fathers and sons, are central to the psychological conflicts, but the main characters are seldom presented with their families. Instead, they are exhibited in bars, poolrooms, cafés, and the haunts of vagrants.

Kennedy makes this unsavory milieu

*Dr. Tanner is a frequent contributor to* Chronicles.



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come alive, primarily because he seems to capture so accurately the various idioms. The slang, sarcasm, profanity, and Irish intonations have the stamp of authenticity and are woven into engaging characterization and narrative. He conveys a period flavor by including the movies and songs of the era, and he recreates old neighborhoods and city landmarks with an obvious tincture of nostalgia. Any prominent figure associated with the city receives mention: the James family, Thomas Dewey, Jack "Legs" Diamond. Fortunately the period material is handled with restraint. He avoids the excesses of Doctorow's *Ragtime* and Joyce Carol Oates's *A Bloodsmoor Romance,* in which period trivia is scattered about gratuitously and the fictional family comes into contact with every headline personality of the age.

*Legs* (1975) is a fictional biography of Jack "Legs" Diamond, the flamboyant gangster who was shot in an Albany rooming house in 1931. Reading it is like watching one of those movies of a criminal's personal life that subtly entices your sympathies until, with an unsettling realization, you find yourself wanting the police to lose. The story is told by Marcus Gorman, an Albany lawyer who foregoes an opportunity for a political career in order to work for Diamond. He sees Jack as "a singular being in a singular land, a fusion of the individual life flux with the clear violent light of American reality." What particularly attracts and fascinates him is Jack's "electric animation" or "luminosity": "You felt something had descended upon him, tongues of fire maybe or his phlogiston itself, burning its way into your own spirit." As one character puts it, he had the right to steal from us: "He was magic. He had power." This irrepressible energy or vitality receives pointed emphasis in the first and last sentences of the novel. In the first, Marcus says, 43 years after Jack was gunned down, "I really don't think he's dead." In the last, Jack is imagined after death saying, "I really don't think I'm dead."

What Kennedy seems to be suggesting is that Jack lives on in a mythic dimension, embodying a repressed desire in the American consciousness for unrestrained, lawless energy. The central preoccupation of the novel is with our paradoxical tendency to enshrine sensational criminals in the same hierarchy with royalty, heroes, and movie stars, seeking their autographs on one occasion and then crying for their blood in a paroxysm of righteous indignation on the next. Kennedy provides no explanation for this phenomenon, probably because he himself is so infatuated with Diamond as mythic figure.

*Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* (1978) is set in Albany in October of 1938. Billy Phelan, a young pool hustler, bookmaker, and all-round gamester, becomes persona non grata in all his regular haunts when a powerful political boss suspects Billy is implicated in the kidnapping of his son. Billy represents the eternal child in man, the instinct for play and games. And this archetypal impulse is one of the novel's two main concerns. The other comes into focus with Martin Daugherty, a newspaperman who mediates between Billy and the political boss. Martin is psychologically tormented by his relationships with his father and his son. His situation, involving a compounded version of the usual Freudian triangle, raises questions about authority, domination, and exploitation in father-son relationships. A recurrent Abraham-Isaac motif is used to signal this theme. In the end, Martin is able to reconcile Billy and the reigning political family by pointing out Billy's peculiar kind of integrity and magic—the same two qualities the narrator of *Legs* finds admirable in Jack Diamond.

Billy's father, Francis, who appears briefly in *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game,*

## LIBERAL CULTURE

### *Cheaper by the Dozen*

According to the *Chicago Tribune* report, the woman, who is in her 20's, is "bosomy, blond." The photograph accompanying the story shows an attractive woman sprawled on a bed as she "pores over cookbooks." Clearly, this woman is a rare find in the 80's, given her predilections. Things, of course, are not what they seem. The woman is one Paula Parkinson, a former Washington lobbyist who two years ago was, the report says, "in the middle of an ugly . . . sex scandal involving six married congressmen." In addition to her other traits and abilities, Ms. Parkinson is a mathematician of morality. Reviewing her reaction to the public disclosure of her involvement with the men, she said:

> I don't think that having sex with six men in two years is that bad . . .

With its inimitable sense of style, *Chicago Tribune* profiles Ms. Parkinson in depth:

> She could cook well, enjoyed entertaining, parties, conservative politics.

The use of verbs by the *Tribune* writer strikes us as somewhat odd, but after a moment of reflection we could finally grasp how one can "enjoy" conservative politics. □



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is the main character in *Ironweed.* This third novel is set in the same time and place as the second; the same background events and characters appear in both. Francis is a bum whose life is a pattern of death and flight. As a talented young baseball player, he was involved in a trolley strike and killed a man by using his skillful throwing arm to hurl a baseball-size stone. He runs. Later he returns and marries, but when he accidentally drops and kills an infant son, he runs again, deserting his family. Now he returns after more than 20 years of drinking, violence, and vagrancy. During Halloween and All Saints Day, the dead he has known appear to him in random encounters; he talks with them the same way he does with other chance acquaintances.

The novel begins in a cemetery and ends with Francis apparently killing another man, this time using a baseball bat on a cop during a raid on a hobo jungle. And on the same night, the woman and man he had teamed up with die. Francis is surrounded with death: "Bodies in alleys, bodies in gutters, bodies anywhere, were part of his eternal landscape: a physical litany of the dead." He has had "a lifetime of corpses." He is plagued with guilt for some of these deaths, and he ponders the question of responsibility: the deaths, his desertion of his family, and the shape of his life in general. He sees himself as "a man in whom there would never be an equanimity of both impulsive and premeditated action," and he is convinced that he lived in "a world where events decided themselves and that all a man could do was to stay one jump into their mystery." He concludes, "My guilt is all that I have left. If I lose it, I have stood for nothing, done nothing."

At the conclusion, Francis is in a boxcar headed out of town again, reverting to the same old pattern of flight described earlier in the novel: "Francis began to run, and in so doing, reconstituted a condition that was as pleasurable to his being as it was natural: the running of bases after the crack of the bat, the running from family, from bondage, from destitution of spirit through ritualistic straightenings, the running, finally, in a quest for pure flight as a fulfilling mannerism of the spirit."

Kennedy's writing is slightly reminiscent of Steinbeck's in its portrayal of the beautiful little people, the lovable bums, of the 30's. There is also the flavor of Steinbeck's nonteleological or "is" thinking: things are the way they are because that is the way they are. Ironweed, we are told in an epigraph, is a member of the sunflower family, receiving its name from the toughness of the stem. The title seems to signify that Francis is like the ironweed, undesirable but tough, and part of an abundant species. His life as a bum is repeatedly linked with sleeping in the weeds. What are the implications of this? Weeds are as much plants as are flowers and vegetables. In fact, the definition of weed is problematic, because some weeds may not be universally recognized as such. The definition really derives from what particular people consider useful and desirable rather than from some inherent characteristic of a plant. Kennedy may be suggesting that people like Francis are weeds, yet they have as much purpose and dignity in the human sphere as weeds do in the scheme of plant life. Weeds, after all, are usually the hardiest of plants.

These Albany novels are characterized by a nonjudgmental attitude; this passes for compassion in contemporary fiction.


**In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:***

## Qualitative Living in a Quantitative World

"A strong case can be made that Western culture began to define itself with the remarkable conjunction of art and philosophy which emerged in Periclean Athens during the fifth century B.C. Arguably, also, the 'decline of the West' began—or at least accelerated—with the development of modern psychology as a popular pseudoscience during the current century. . . . The classical attempt to *understand* man's complex relationships to the mysteries of nature and life was crudely transformed into an effort to *explain* . . . that has turned into the bizarre Theater of Contemporary Psychology . . . . [which] may well have produced the ultimate Frankenstein monster, a self-consciousness that paralyzes instead of liberates and which finally destroys the very phenomena it seeks to explain."

**—from "Tales of the Unknown" by David A. Hallman**

**Also:**

**Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus**
**Perceptibles—Waste of Money**
**The American Proscenium—Screen**
**Art—Music—Correspondence—Journalism**
**Liberal Culture**





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There is an overt antagonism toward moralism. Religion has a prominent place because most of the characters are Irish Catholics, but it is treated as a cultural phenomenon of essentially negative consequence. The question of moral responsibility is toyed with, but the impression left is that the lives of men and women are largely determined by forces outside their control. There are passages near the end of *Ironweed* in which Kennedy seems to be on the verge of illuminating in a profound way the tangled riddle of moral responsibility; ultimately his treatment is ambiguous. The values that animate his artistic vision are an indiscriminate tolerance and a fondness for energy, vitality, and the instinct for play in human personality. Integrity is important, but it is defined as adherence to the values just mentioned.

Despite the many admirable qualities of Kennedy's fiction, his moral vision is at times astonishing and unsettling. For example, the narrator of *Legs* says he is "bored by people who keep returning life to a moral plane, as if we were reducible, now, to some Biblical concept or its opposite, as if all our history and prehistory had not conditioned us for what we've become. . . . When we get off the moral gold standard, when the man of enormous wealth [moral wealth?] is of no more importance to anybody than the man in rags, then maybe we'll look back at our own day as a day of justifiable social wrath." He calls Jack Diamond a pioneer, likens him to Prometheus, and says, "I don't want to trivialize Jack's achievement by linking him to lesser latter-day figures such as Richard Nixon, who left significant history in his wake, but no legend; whose corruption, overwhelmingly venal and invariably hypocritical, lacked the admirably white core fantasy that can give evil a mythical dimension." Or consider the climax to the Abraham-Isaac motif in the second novel. The slogan "free the children" comes into Martin's head like a war cry: "Stop the fascists." He concludes: "To free the children it is necessary to rupture the conspiracy against them. We are all in conspiracy against the children. Fathers, mothers, teachers, priests, bankers, politicians, gods, and prophets. For Abraham of the upraised knife, prototypical fascist father, Isaac was only a means to an enhanced status as a believer. Go f [—] yourself with your knife, Abe."

Matthew 13 tells us how the wheat and tares grow together in this life. If Kennedy were one of the reapers during the great time of harvest, one wonders where he would apply the match. □

# Sense in a Savage Society

**Blanche Bernstein: *The Politics of Welfare: The New York City Experience;* Abt Books; Cambridge, MA.**

**Joseph Sobran: *Single Issues;* The Human Life Press; New York.**

**by Allan C. Carlson**

The *New York Times* once labeled her "an acerbic, unsentimental, highly schooled critic of government welfare policies." *Amsterdam News* dismissed her as "anti-poor." In fact, Blanche Bernstein proved to be one of the few defenders of the poor remaining by the late 1970's with a clear enough head to recognize some of the disastrous consequences of the welfare policies pursued during the preceding two decades. As New York State's deputy commissioner for income maintenance (1975-78) and chief of New York City's sprawling Human Resources Administration (1978-79), Dr. Bernstein worked to turn matters around. She believed that the system could be run both efficiently and compassionately, that fraud could be reduced, and that the integrity of welfare programs could be restored by vigilance and close attention to administrative detail. Before being pressured out of office by the cabal of welfare professionals, "minority leaders," civil libertarians, and political hacks that make up the "welfare community," she managed to prove her point. *The Politics of Welfare* is her testimony and prognosis for the future.

*Dr. Carlson is editor of* Persuasion at Work.

Bernstein moved into social service administration at the tail end of a quantum jump in the level of welfare dependency. As late as 1960, there were a mere 3 million recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the largest Federal welfare program. True to original congressional intent, a hefty portion of even these recipients were widows and orphans. By 1976, however, 10.8 million were on AFDC, all but a handful being unwed or divorced mothers and their offspring. Similarly, the food-stamp program, recast in its current form in 1964, claimed 9.4 million recipients in 1971 and 22 million in 1980.

What lay behind this vast expansion in the scope of welfare in America? At one level, the system simply fell captive to bands of activists determined to redistribute income, and the more the better. The quadrupling of the welfare case load in New York City during the 1960's, Bernstein notes, was for minority leaders, radical clergy, welfare workers, and liberal politicos "less a cause of concern over the evidence of increasing dependency than a cause for rejoicing that justice was finally being done." Among caseworkers, "it became something of a badge of honor . . . to manipulate the regulations to build the largest possible grant for a client." Food-stamp advocacy groups, working through the regulatory agencies and the courts, promoted "the broadest possible interpretation of the laws and regulations" to increase the number of recipients, "no matter what the results were in administrative complexity, costs, and potential



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errors." Food-stamp regulations were so lax that overpayments to recipients who had conveniently "forgotten" to tell the welfare office some fact relevant to their benefit level proved uncollectible. As one "welfare rights" group advised its clients, "You only have to pay back the [illegally acquired] stamps if you want to." Such a situation was tailor-made for fraud and abuse.

In this milieu, welfare recipients evolved into a special class, one at once pampered and regimented by their caseworkers. The "welfare community" fought for years against efforts to move AFDC mothers with children over the age of two into paying jobs. It was "immoral" to force such women to take "menial" work, activists charged. Or there weren't "adequate day-care slots available." Bernstein cuts through this Alice-in-Wonderland cant. "In the world around us," she notes, "more than half the female heads of households are working and are not on welfare. They apparently can be trusted to make adequate arrangements for the care of their children. . . . But once the mother is on welfare, she cannot work unless a variety of officials agree that [her] child-care arrangements are satisfactory." Toss in the author's dissection of the omnipresent "Welfare Advisory Committees" (labeled "the high priests of welfare"), her rebuke of the reigning orthodoxy among welfare professionals that "the client is always right and never says anything but the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (not the liberal view, she suggests, but "simple naiveté"), and her slap at the vainglorious judges who cast themselves "in the image of Solomon" above legislative intent, and she has affirmed by experience most of the "conservative myths" about welfare.

A more fundamental reason for the rise in welfare dependency after 1960, though, was a seldom-acknowledged upheaval in normative social relationships; specifically, the unprecedented growth in the number of female-headed families. Between 1969 and 1978, the count of statistically defined poor black families headed by men actually fell 34%. Meanwhile, the number of poor female-headed black families climbed 64%. In that latter year, only 6% of all two-parent families fell below the poverty line, compared to 42% of female-headed families. "One of the most fascinating welfare

statistics in New York," Bernstein notes, "is the *tiny* number of intact families receiving welfare." Echoing, with a twist, the famed 1968 Kerner Commission report on urban riots, she concludes "that the black and Hispanic communities are moving toward two societies: one composed of intact families, the other of female-headed families—separate and unequal. . . . We are in danger of creating a permanent underclass in the country."

Clearly, the most effective way to reduce welfare dependency would be somehow to promote the formation and maintenance of intact families. But here the difficulties, both ideological and practical, multiply. Back in 1965, then-Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel P. Moynihan had already fingered illegitimacy, divorce, and the female-headed family as the sources of urban social pathology and the emerging welfare crisis. Yet the so-called "Moynihan Report" quickly became the bête noire of "progressive" social forces. Widely attacked for its "racist," "middle-class" (and later "sexist") assumptions that female-headed families and illegitimacy were abnormal or immoral, the Report marked a turning point in liberal welfare policy. Normative social standards rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition—which had animated the New Deal among other policy formulations—were quickly abandoned in favor of a chic, value-neutral relativism. Moynihan and the Lyndon Johnson Administration thereupon beat a hasty retreat from "family policy."

The situation has scarcely improved today. Bernstein notes that the "welfare community" still dogmatically denies any linkage between dependency and family breakdown, ascribing the former status instead to racial discrimination, unemployment, underfunded schools, poor housing, and so on through the frazzled list of "causes" that left-liberal analysts drag out on every occasion. Furthermore, feminist outrage at the suggestion that women with children might benefit from a husband-father around the house has only increased in recent years.

Bernstein calls for a new government agenda "addressed to the task of finding ways to counteract trends toward family instability [and] ways of promoting the formation of intact families." Unfortunately, her overriding managerial-scientific view of the welfare problem does not allow for a full appreciation of those tasks. Painstaking management and a few simple devices (such as regular, face-to-face eligibility reviews of all recipients) allowed her to cut the number of ineligible recipients in New York City from 13% in 1975 to 5% in 1980 and to reduce the number receiving overpayments from 35 to 15%. Yet this same technical orientation cannot provide solutions to the essentially moral problems underlying the decay of family life. Bernstein sacrifices considerable ground, for instance, in her strained avoidance of the word "illegitimate" (she uses instead "the nonformation of families"). Elsewhere, the author insists that the birth of children to unwed 14- and 15-year-olds should not be viewed as "a problem of



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morality" but as one "of economic and social well-being." She argues that the "answers" to her new family agenda "lie in the whole range of the social, physical, and biomedical sciences." Normative values, religious traditions, and ethical teachings are curiously ignored.

In truth, public life stands at the mercy of private life. When the latter falters, there is little that governments can do to set things right. This insight, borrowed from C. S. Lewis, is the theme animating Joseph Sobran's new volume of essays, *Single Issues.* With this book, James P. McFadden adds to the reputation of his nascent publishing house, The Human Life Press. Perhaps more than any single individual, McFadden has quietly raised the quality of public discourse on the issues of abortion, family policy, infanticide, and the role of moral judgments in public life. Facing a hostile, secular left desperately seeking to dismiss such issues as trivialities, McFadden recognized early on that rational, historic, and compassionate analyses of such questions could only work to the advantage of traditional forces.

Mr. Sobran, senior editor of *National Review* and columnist for the *Los Angeles Times,* tackles head-on the "single issue" charge frequently bandied about by the mainstream media. The debates over family, sexuality, abortion, and secularization, he insists, are indeed singular, fundamental. What issues could be nearer to the heart of civilization, he asks? Why does "mainstream" opinion fear debate "about what man is, and about what society should be"? In answer, Sobran suggests that American liberalism, while calling itself "pluralist," is in fact aggressively secularist, seeking "to force religious awareness out of public life . . . while blandly pretending nothing serious is at stake."

His essays on subjects ranging from fatherhood to pornography to the "value-free society" work gracefully and insightfully to gird up and reinterpret a badly mauled cultural and social patrimony. For example, rejecting what he calls the "orgasm ethic," Sobran emphasizes the linkage between sexual love and social order. "The ability to enjoy full sexual rapture and yet to subordinate it to the discipline of fidelity," he writes, "is a genuine human achievement—and a fruitful one. It gives resonance to individual lives and health to whole societies." Elsewhere, he decries "the crimes of secularism," insisting that the "human rights" logo include "not only the right to dissent, but the right to worship" and that secularism "be judged not by its professions of tolerance, but by its own international record . . . [which] is a grisly one everywhere." Turning to the family, Sobran states that its current weakened status could never have been imposed from above. "To a great extent, alas, it springs from popular demand. Fornication, adultery, and abortion are nothing new. . . . But these old sins are now being institutionalized as 'rights,' and . . . are now forming part of a new and malign political order in which the reality of the family must crumble before the reality of sheer state power." As Dr. Bernstein pursues her new family-oriented agenda, she should keep this useful, moral, and historical message in mind. □

# A Man Out of Time

**Alzina Stone Dale: *The Outline of Sanity: A Biography of G. K. Chesterton;* William B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.**

**by Keith Bower**

In an all-too-brief flicker of creativity, Hollywood produced an imaginative movie in 1979 called *Time After Time.* The premise of the film was that Jack the Ripper, a hedonistic, Edwardian physician, shows up at a dinner party of H. G. Wells's fresh from a kill. The police are hot on his heels, so the Ripper absents himself from the party, choosing Wells's basement for his hiding place. There he finds the Time Machine and through industrious guesswork manipulates the levers and dials projecting himself forward to San Francisco, 1979. Wells discovers his friend's method of escape and, through an altruistic urge to save the future from this monster, pursues him. Wells eventually defeats the rogue, but not before learning that the glorious utopia he'd expected has actually become the sort of moral vacuum for which the Ripper is perfectly adapted. It's a clever idea, but if the producers had any knowledge of who H. G. Wells was they didn't let on. They could have at least consulted Rebecca West before making H. G. into a prudish Victorian, when in fact he was more of a goatish Edwardian. It would have been much more amusing to have G. K. Chesterton pursuing Wells into the frolicsome Haight-Ashbury.

Wells certainly could have done far worse damage to the future than the Ripper, and Chesterton would have been the perfect man to catch him. After all, Chesterton's biographers point out repeatedly that time meant nothing to G. K. He never let it enter his calculations. Chesterton was an ideal traveler; his philosophy of tourism was never to ridicule a culture for being different from one's own. Whereas Wells would have been crushed at the apparent failure of technology to elevate the human condition beyond the capital vices, Chesterton would have embraced whatever reality he'd stumbled upon, thinking none the worse of men that still needed saving. He knew they would always perform at much the same level, though he never gave up hope that some political system could be developed that would permit men to experience a more natural relationship to the land and to one another.

In his journeys Chesterton might have stumbled into a meeting of environmen-

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talists; he would have cheered them on. He would have also cautioned them against believing that cleaning up the Bay would absolve them of their sins. He might have turned in at an art gallery qua flophouse and would have despaired that after all this time the decadents of the fin de siècle still rule the arts. Pursuing Wells into the countryside, around Mill Valley, say, he might have come upon a sleepy commune and recalled his thoughts on distribution, concluding that although the motto "Three Acres and a Cow" was still sound, men tended to turn it into "Three Cows and An Acre" and preferred their livestock to be two-legged.

But one thing is certain: Chesterton would have still been in love with the world, even with the morass of modern society. He might even have been overjoyed to find that Liberalism of the sort he held had made it through the second global war he'd prophesied, and that some adherents still practiced it, though ineffectually, as usual.

Writing a biography about Chesterton must be a lot like chasing a man through a Time Machine. It would be frightening; it would be fascinating. The fascination explains itself to anyone who has ever read anything by Chesterton. The frightening part would be the prospect of trying to come to grips with explaining some of the wittiest and most profound prose of our century. Alzina Stone Dale has done a remarkable job of keeping the life of Chesterton intriguing without trying to match him in journalistic scintillation. That would be a fruitless task. In *The Outline of Sanity* she explains the intricacies of English politics and emphasizes the world of Fleet Street, to which Chesterton devoted his life. The temptation is there to scold him, as Garry Wills did in *Chesterton: Man and Mask,* for not pursuing the life of high literature at which he would have excelled had he dropped "jolly journalism." However, Dale's painstakingly scholarly book is a historical, not literary, treatment of Chesterton.

Dale's purpose is to place each of Chesterton's books and stories within the fabric of the England of his day, giving brief (sometimes cursory) synopses that act as prods to read the original works. All of Chesterton's biographies—except perhaps Ada Chesterton's—leave one amazed at how prolific he managed to be considering his habits and work load, his distractions and amazing levity. (Ada's biography leaves one wondering what restrained G.K. from rising from the dead and choking the life out of her.) Dale's biography does not attempt any novel reconsideration of Chesterton, which is all the more in her favor. Literary criticism would be just the sort of thing one would want to steer clear of in dealing with Chesterton. He intended his writings for the common man, taking on the mantle of Cobbett and Stevenson and Dickens, and performing exceedingly well as all three. Their shades undoubtedly snort when some clerk takes on the role of diviner, examing their entrails for incipient homosexuality; some have tried this on Chesterton, capitalizing on his close friendships with the Junior Debate Club. These writers did not have excessive amounts of literary ego, and although they were personable and the act of writing is by nature egotistical, their function was not to provide themes for Edmund Wilson or Leslie Fiedler.

From Cobbett Chesterton obtained much of his political insight: his fury at the enclosures, his remorse at the act of Henry VIII by which the commoner was divorced from the land and the Church properties absorbed into the nascent aristocracy. From Dickens he learned the art of characterology; from it he derived his "mystical minimum"—the intrinsic worth of each man—before ever having met the Thomistic exaltation of the individual soul. This was his introduction to Liberalism, as was the guidance given him by his parents in classical Victorian Liberalism. Stevenson brought him the joys of a simple, grand style, a rip-roaring plot, and the comfort of a moral resolution of events.

These were the tools of Chesterton which, combined with a genius for paradoxical analysis, good humor, and a phenomenally retentive memory, made him the unique voice of a vanishing creed. Some would say there were two creeds going out the window with Chesterton: liberalism and orthodox Christianity. But, as one of his characters pointed out, confinement is not good for something meant to sweep over the entire earth. Many have wondered what Chesterton would have thought of Pope John XXIII's *aggiornamento,* but the connotation of the word, which has come to express the gist of Vatican II, would probably have thrilled him. Of course we should open the windows! Thrust the dogmas of Christ out of the stuffy *aula* of the Council and into the marketplace of ideas; what is there to fear if they are the Truth?

The same goes for Liberalism, though with less assurance that its supporters will gain the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

## In the Mail

***Book Burning* by Cal Thomas; Crossway Books; Westchester, IL.** Things would be a bit less inflammatory if Mr. Thomas presented some more sophisticated arguments.

***Criminal Justice Reform,* edited by Patrick B. McGuigan and Randall R. Radar; Regnery Gateway; Chicago.** Serious crime— rape, robbery or aggravated assault —is more likely to affect an individual in the U.S. than a residential fire or an auto accident, so the editors note. Smoke detectors and seat belts, it seems, are more effective than the judicial system.

***Keepers of the Kingdom* by Glennita Miller; Simon & Schuster; New York.** A novel about the depopulation of African elephants by thugs with four-wheel-drive vehicles.



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Liberalism, which today is called conservatism, is a political creed. Chesterton had few illusions about the temporality of political beliefs. They were things that could be defended, like the Cross, but which it was not always the privilege of men to have as they wanted them. To Chesterton the ideal of free men ruling their own fate was bound up with their possession of property. He saw a measure of validity in the rising Trade Unionists, because he accepted the fact that in an industrial society men had possession only of their time and their skills, the two things given them by God which only death and tyranny could rend from them. In his lifetime he saw the party of Gladstone devolve into the poverty of Lloyd George. The only despair any of Chesterton's biographers note in his career was during the Marconi Scandal, which he considered the beginning of the end for English politics.

But his despair was not so much for the political fate of his fellow Englishmen. As Musie Ward and Alzina Stone Dale both recount, his feelings turned black at the thought of his brother's defeat. The climate of free debate had reached the point where men with the courage of Cecil Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc could no longer function without fear of libel. The thought of his brother's ignominy at the hands of public swindlers, Cecil's loss of courage and face at his trial, and his valiant death after having sacrificed his health at Boulogne defending England in a war resulting from political lack of nerve in the face of Prussianism—these things made Chesterton choke with rage.

It is easy to see why he would not despair of politics, why he never became upset with his critics but always treated his enemies, even Wells, with condescending praise and delight. In *The Everlasting Man* Chesterton writes:

> If anybody says that philosophic maxims preserved through many ages, or mythological temples frequented by many people are things of the same class and category as the Church, it is enough to answer that they are not.

He saw that the faith of Christ truly reflected its Divine Master, for it had died and been reborn at least five times by his calculations. It had thrived under the worst tyrannies and usually hibernated under benevolence. So Chesterton welcomed his enemies, for they were watering the seeds of the next resurrection with their opprobrium.

There is much of the personal and public Chesterton in this biography, although Ward's magnificent *Life* and her *Return to Chesterton* draw a fuller portrait of the man who entertained nieces and nephews with a toy theater, sent paper snakes down the stairs from his study, recited "Lepanto" for the approval of a child. And no one has yet found a way of explaining how such a simple soul came to possess such a devastating wit, or to be able to analyze Aquinas in such a way that even Gilson stood amazed. Dale refers simply to the claim by some that he was a Thomist by "connaturality," but that "This approach curiously divorces Chesterton the man from his own 'historical figure in history.'" And so it should be, for Chesterton would be the first to admit that he belonged in a medieval age because, in such an era, all men would be better off than in the rabbit warren of modern times. Dale tries to rebuff the taunts of Shaw and Wells that Chesterton was a figment of a bygone era, but she misses the point. Chesterton did not deserve pity for a seemingly unjust attempt to discount his thought; his medievalism was the calling card of his whole literary enterprise: to draw men back was the truest form of revolution.

It still is. And if Chesterton were to run off in a Time Machine after Wells, it would not be to tug his sleeve and yank him back to the past, but to catapult the both of them into the next age after this humanism breathes its last, and the next after that, so that for all time men would have them available as reminders of where things really stand. But the way Chesterton looked at it, someone else had already provided that surety with the mingling of water and wine. □

# Guns, Butter & Bluster

**Thomas Powers: *Thinking About the Next War;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.**

**Benjamin I. Page: *Who Gets What from Government;* University of California Press; Berkeley.**

**by William R. Hawkins**

Thomas Powers believes that "we have not seen the last of the big wars, and the next one will probably involve the use of nuclear weapons." He bases his conclusion on the fact that nations get what they have planned for and that the superpowers have been planning for a nuclear war for nearly 40 years. He does not believe that American leaders, civilian or military, want war. He discovered in interviews with bomber pilots, weapons designers, and Pentagon strategists that the Strategic Air Command's motto, "Peace is Our Profession," is a sincerely held faith. But at some point they will use their weapons as they have been trained to do. He is less clear about what the Soviets think. No mention is made of the volumes of Soviet writings which indicate that Soviet leaders consider a nuclear war to be winnable. Instead, he pins a few hopes on remarks by Khrushchev to the effect that nuclear war would not make sense. This appeals to Powers because he does not feel that any war makes sense, an idea he carries to extremes.

He praises Bertrand Russell for opposing World War I on the grounds that

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nothing was at stake. He states that World War II "all but wrecked Western civilization for no purpose." In his discussion of Clausewitz, he mentions that the Napoleonic Wars were useless. This is not a new outlook for Powers. In his earlier book *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (for which he won a Pulitzer), he dismisses the fate of Vietnam, Angola, Cuba, and Chile under Allende as unimportant; too unimportant, at least, for the U.S. to worry about.

But what has been at stake in recent wars? The governments of 1914 had various motives for expanding a terrorist incident into a general war, but at the heart of the matter lay the fate of Austro-Hungary threatened by revolutionary nationalist forces. As Austrian expert Paul W. Schroeder always told his classes in diplomatic history, "A Great Power does not disappear from the map without a struggle." Austria moved to crush Serbia, the revolutionaries' base; Russia could not allow this without losing credibility as the protector of the Balkan Slavs. Germany had only one ally and could not let Austria go down to defeat, which meant fighting France as well as Russia. The entire political organization of Central and Eastern Europe was at stake; it was changed dramatically by the defeat of Germany, Austria, and Russia. Wars do have consequences.

World War II and the French Wars of the Revolution and Napoleon also centered on the political organization of nearly all of Europe. Ideology and the desire to limit apparently limitless expansion by one power are characteristics of both. What stakes could be higher? The ideological wars since 1945 even more clearly revolve around the very foundations of how current and future generations will live. This seems beyond Powers's comprehension. "A chunk of Central Europe" is "something small" to Powers and not worth fighting for. It may make a difference, however, to many as to which side of the Berlin Wall they live on.

Powers has considerable tactical knowledge about weapons. He can easily write about accuracy, counterforce, B-52 bombers, etc. Indeed, his essay on the evolution of strategic forces in the November 1982 issue of *The Atlantic* is excellent, far better than this book. However, he lacks a strategic understanding of war. This is most apparent when, after wrestling with Clausewitz and losing, he falls back on General Sherman's simple remark that "War is Hell."

Yet, he does have a realist streak. He understands that the new accuracy in missile warheads allows targeting of military units and moves us away from genocidal assaults on cities. He also knows that this improved accuracy means that first strikes against static missile silos are possible and have a fair chance of success. In a rare mention of the Soviets, he acknowledges that this is the purpose of the SS-18 with its 10 one-megaton warheads. He does not believe the doomsayers who claim that a nuclear war would end all life on earth or even within the warring nations. He leans towards the idea that a war would be limited, perhaps fought over weeks or months with periodic small attacks rather than the mutual suicide of a "spasm" war with everything fired indiscriminantly in one salvo. He does not believe it is ra-

## LIBERAL CULTURE

### *Strange Bedfellows*

Liberal pseudopluralism has finally met itself both coming and going in the politics/money game. The ground rules go something like this: Right-wing money is inherently bad, antihumanitarian, probably acquired either through shady means or from the sweat of the poor proles. Left-wing money, on the other hand, is good; its origins may be obscure, but in the hands of socially acceptable liberals it is *always* used to further the propagation of proper ideas, which, of course, are *always* of great benefit to "the people." A prominent player in the game is one Stewart Mott, darling of the liberal New York establishment, espouser of all the "correct" causes. But Mr. Mott has committed heresy: he believes that it is his right to spend his money in whatever way he wishes ("ladling out money as he likes"), including contributing as much as he wants to his preferred political candidates. According to *Village Voice*, Mott has joined forces with the "political terror[ist]" Terry Dolan of the notorious NCPAC to defeat a legislative bill (and its congressional supporters) which would limit private (*read* PAC) campaign contributions. *VV*, of course, would prefer taxpayer-financed campaigns.

It's difficult to tell what enrages *VV* more: Is it that one of their own is actually associating with the right-wingers, or that Mr. Mott has stepped outside the boundaries of the game? One ironic aspect of this minitempest is that the political causes and operators to whom Mr. Mott would like to ladle out his money are certainly the very ones the *VV* collectivists dearly love. Thus, the liberals' "free choice" seems to be rather similar to Henry Ford's color selection for his Model T's: you can finance anything you want as long as it's theirs. (RW) □

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tional to fight a war, but once a war begins, rational calculations will govern operations. He also believes that both sides would hold back a reserve which would be the basis for exercising power in the postwar world. This implies the survival of state and society, though probably under military rule.

Unfortunately, his views are not always consistent. This is largely due to the fact that this collection of essays was written over seven years (1976-82). That these 19 essays were written for the Catholic, leftish *Commonweal* also plays a part. By *Commonweal* standards, Powers is a "hawk." Still, on occasion, Powers feels the need to feed the prejudices of his audience. If the new technology requires a change in strategy and hardware, then the Carter-Reagan defense buildup is necessary. However, Powers states at one point that if Reagan gets what he wants in defense spending, he will wreck either the economy or the nation, depending on how much is cut from social programs to "pay" for defense. The more cuts, the more the "nation" is imperiled.

Powers also makes mistakes. At several points he claims that the U.S. has constantly increased the power of its nuclear arsenal since World War II. He claims he does not have the figures to prove this, which is hard to believe given his research and the ease by which such statistics can be obtained. In truth, the power of the U.S. arsenal has declined by half since 1968. This is because we have replaced many one-megaton single warheads with much smaller MIRV's. A Minuteman III with three 0.17-megaton warheads has only half the megatonnage of the Minuteman II. Thus, warheads have increased, but not destructive power, another benefit of the new technology. This decline is even greater for submarine-launched missiles. In addition, 10 missile submarines have been taken out of the force and not yet replaced by Tridents. This sort of error can only be an attempt to attribute overbuilding to the U.S. At another point, Powers claims that the Soviets would *follow* any attempt by the U.S. to stockpile reserve weapons in shelters. It is well known that the Soviets are already doing this. Soviet SS-18 and SS-19 silos, unlike American silos, are equipped for "cold" launches so that they can be reloaded. The SS-20 also has reloads. Such reserves make arms-control agreements based on silos or deployed launchers meaningless.

Powers will not take sides in the debate over Soviet motivations. Whether the Soviets are paranoid because of past invasions and encirclement by capitalism, or whether they are expansionists with an ideological cause makes little difference to him. Either could produce a mood in Moscow which considers war to be inevitable. This leads to the greatest single contradiction in Powers's work. If technology, planning, and attitudes are all pointing toward World War III, is it not wise to do more to prepare for it?

It is easy to accept from history the lesson that deterrence is only a temporary condition, capable of affecting the timing but not the inevitability of a clash. It has failed often enough in the past. But that acceptance should motivate action, not the maudlin resignation of Powers. He can see only two camps: those who favor more weapons to prop up deterrence and those who favor disarmament to avoid war. A war will prove the "doves" right. A third option, that weapons are not only needed to deter but also to fight a war, is not considered. *Thinking About the Next War* includes nothing about protecting American lives through defensive measures nor anything about a strategy for winning a war. But if war is no longer "unthinkable," both of these issues are vital.

That is, they are vital to anyone who wants to see the U.S. survive. Benjamin Page is not so concerned. In his discussion of defense spending he postulates the result of a Soviet conquest of the U.S.:

> The capitalists' wealth would presumably be expropriated by a Soviet-imposed North American Socialist Republic. . . . The factory worker, on the other hand, has less to lose economically and might conceivably come out ahead if the economy were socialized and his workplace publicly owned. If American workers would, in fact, be better off under socialism, it is possible that their tax dollars spent on defense against international socialism do them more harm than good. If so, defense spending is fundamentally pro-rich.

Is it possible that a political science professor at the University of Chicago has never heard of Lech Walesa?

*Who Gets What* does contain some interesting factual information on government taxation and spending programs and their links to certain parts of the economy, as do college textbooks on public finance. What makes Page intriguing is his all-consuming ideological outlook and his demonstration of the essential unity of leftist thought across the entire spectrum from liberalism to communism.

Perhaps the best way to define the difference between right and left is on the issue of equality. Behind this issue lie the competing concepts of what constitutes justice. Do all people deserve equal income, respect, and influence because they are human beings with souls or, at least, consciousness? Or do different people justly deserve different incomes and gradated rankings in the social hierarchy by virtue of their different levels of performance or contribution to society? In practice, if left to their own devices, people work themselves out to be highly unequal. Equality is not a natural state unless the overall standard of living is so low that all are equal in poverty. That is why early theories of equality started with a state of nature. However, as soon as progress becomes feasible, some found that they had the ability to make progress more rapidly than others. History indicates that this minority of ambitious or energetic or curious individuals have pulled the rest up the ladder of success behind them.

If inequality is normal, then outside intervention is required to create equality. Conservatives defend the traditional



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working of society against movements for artificial equality. Right-libertarians defend the freedom to be unequal (meaning better) against state power that curbs achievement, while left-libertarians call for equality of status for those who behave in unequal (meaning morally inferior) ways. Though both groups of libertarians claim to be individualists, they attempt to affect the status of those they champion in different ways. Thus conservatives and right-libertarians find that they have a stake in the traditional society which socialists and left-libertarians consider oppressive.

Page, despite his fondness for socialism, does not base his argument on Marx. He goes back further to a pure form of utilitarianism, thus forging a link between 19th- and 20th-century liberalism before moving rapidly further left. To Page it is self-evident that the marginal utility of a dollar gained by the poor is greater than the marginal utility lost to the rich for having a dollar taken away. Thus total utility (happiness) for society can be increased by redistribution until full equality is reached. This goes rather farther than Bentham, Mill, or Pigou were willing to go. It also violates the principle that interpersonal utility comparisons are invalid because they are purely subjective and abstract. Page gets around this by arguing that if such comparisons are not going to be made, then it is pointless to talk about social justice. Quite so.

The only barrier Page can see to redistribution is that under a capitalist system incentives need to be maintained so that people will work hard, save, and invest. He concedes that if future increases in income for the poor can only be achieved by letting some others have more income now to support growth, then inequality is rational (though still not just). However, he does not believe private investment is the only way to grow. State control of investment and the means of production can serve the same ends. Substitution of peer-group pressure and patriotism can replace material incentives in the work place.

More basic sources of inequality are also to be attacked. Page is familiar with Christopher Jencks's research showing that family life is the principle explanation for unequal levels of achievement. Therefore, the family must be eliminated in favor of communal child-rearing. We should look to communist China or Cuba for lessons in creating the new socialist man (though he is distressed by what he sees as backsliding toward material incentives in both socialist states).

It is enthralling to watch Page's rapid movements in the confines of a single book. Taking the path from classical liberal to self-affirmed democratic socialist is not unusual these days, but his constant references to the Soviets, Cuba, and communist China clearly show how setting even one foot on the slippery slope of socialism can whisk a person straight into the abyss.

Page's quest for equality is all-inclusive; thus, foreign policy is also an issue. American policy, he contends, is to "keep the poor from taking any of its wealth and thereby preserve international inequality." He is disturbed because just 10 percent of the world's population, the U.S., receives 30 percent of the global income. He fails to consider that this is because the U.S. produces 30 percent of global output. A preference for socialism at home easily becomes linked with loyalty to foreign movements ("international socialism" or the "international left") aimed against one's own homeland, which earlier generations did not hesitate to call treason, but which moderns term freedom of opinion.

Page's book serves to remind one of the wisdom of two time-honored notions. One is Adam Smith's statement:

> It is only under the shelter of the civil magistrate that the owner of that valuable property which is acquired by the labour of many years . . . can sleep a single night. He is at all times surrounded by unknown enemies, whom, though he never provoked, he can never appease and from whose injustice he can only be protected by the powerful arm of the civil magistrate continually held up to chastise it.

The other is the need to have those who fill these protective posts swear an oath to defend our civilization against all enemies, foreign *and* domestic. □

# The Pursuit of Purposelessness

**Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller: *Charlie Company: What Vietnam Did to Us;* Newsweek/William Morrow; New York.**

**by James Hamilton**

Fifteen years have elapsed since President Lyndon Johnson abandoned his responsibilities as commander in chief of a nation at war to devote his energies to the pursuit of an elusive peace. Over seven years have passed since the North Vietnamese forces rolled through South Vietnam and obliterated any hope that a "decent interval" would intervene between the departure of American troops and the annihilation of our former allies in Southeast Asia. Long after "Peace with Honor" became the final cliché of United States involvement in Vietnam, the carnage continues. The nation now has a Vietnam Memorial and the veterans have had their parade, but we have effectively suppressed any public discussion of why we lost that seedy war.

Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller, staff members of *Newsweek,* surveyed the members of Charlie Company of the First Army 10 to 12 years after their return from Vietnam. Charlie Company had engaged in some of the heaviest fighting of 1968 and 1969, and 12 of its

*Mr. Hamilton is a free-lance writer.*



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members never made it back for interviews. Sixty-five others were found by *Newsweek* or contacted the magazine themselves after an article on their fellow soldiers had appeared. These men talked at considerable length, largely because in the decade between their return and the *Newsweek* reporters' arrival, no one else seemed interested in listening.

As if in a state of national amnesia, American citizens and leaders have preferred to ignore Vietnam rather than to consider the subtitle of this volume: *What Vietnam Did to Us.* Both those who supported and those who opposed the war appear to prefer national silence to a frank discussion of the consequences of their actions. Although this book is a tragic reminder of the self-imposed limitations of any society that would extend hedonistic individualism to the point that it becomes the dominant thrust of even our most vital public endeavors, it, too, sustains that silence on the key questions. Neither the reporters nor the former soldiers appear to have any unified answer to those questions. The book provides 65 different opinions, all from the ground level. No one perspective guides the reportage, and, serving the canons of journalistic objectivity, the reporters make no effort to weed out the fatuous and the frivolous observations from the more sober reflections. Small wonder that the resulting stew of opinions is indigestible, lacking a common flavor despite the mixture of ingredients.

Vietnam was an unnerving war both for those who fought it and for those of us who lived through the domestic skirmishes. The nation slid into the exercise, with no clarion call to battle. President Johnson first offered "guns and butter," as if this war would pose no real strain on a people as great as Americans. Then he abruptly attempted to remove the war from political discussion as he recanted his candidacy for reelection. The war had been *his* decision, and one as imperious as this President would not deign to answer to the electorate for his actions. Johnson's abdication presented the American people with an electoral impasse. No candidate would publicly deny that the war was worth the valiant efforts our troops demonstrated (that rejection came later), but that tacit assumption was apparent when officials regularly affirmed that the primary task of the soldiers in Vietnam was to get home as quickly as possible. The American psyche rebelled at the notion that the primary purpose of hostilities is their cessation. From all indications in these interviews, it is still in rebellion.

Most of those who served have no idea why their country asked this service of them. None interviewed believed that the war was to prevent the spread of a dreadful form of government, despite the evidence that legitimates that view since the fall of Saigon in April 1975. Not one of them mentions the notion of human freedom. Some confront the possibility that we fought for rice plants and rubber trees, but the price was too great to make such trivial stakes a credible rationale. One is tempted to hope that this inability to develop an explanation is a quirk of the company selected for these interviews. This concept is dashed by survey evidence indicating that 70 percent of the generals who led these troops into battle have no better understanding of the reasons for the war than the men they commanded.

In the absence of any common purpose, each soldier adopted an immediate and pressing personal purpose: the quest for survival. In cases where the soldier knew that his term of service would be one year—unless involuntarily terminated ahead of schedule—the primary incentives were to avoid danger with increasing intensity as the anniversary of arrival approached. Understandably, men placed into combat yet given no larger reason to fight fought no better than was necessary to ensure their return home. At times, even that required heroic action, but such heroic accounts comprise a minuscule portion of the text. Mostly, these are tales of dangers evaded, either by avoiding contact with the enemy while in the field or by indulgence in drugs and alcohol in the barracks. Be-

## LIBERAL CULTURE

### *We Told You So*

The flotsam of the 1960's are littering the shores of our everydayness in the form of fetid refuse. Here is some news about one of the most repellent "heroes" of that time, one David Crosby of the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young rock group. Mr. Crosby was convicted in a Texas court of possession of cocaine, as was recently reported by a provincial daily:

> The pudgy singer wore dirty tennis shoes, baggy corduroy pants, a work shirt and a black-and-white plaid jacket to Friday's non-jury trial. His graying, tangled hair was pulled back in a ponytail. Crosby spent most of his day in court trying to stay awake. But several times he fell asleep and snored loudly, his head tilted back and his mouth open. When the snoring became too loud, one of his attorneys leaned over and shook him awake.

One of the counterculture's most idiotic articles of faith was the assumption that youth is eternal and aging is a lie that is disseminated by the American fascist-corporate system of repression. But apparently it isn't so, and now we have among us the most despicable and repugnant of creatures: the senescent adolescent. □



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tween the isolated incidents of real valor, there is little to admire either in the character of those who served or in their conduct since their service. Many of these men are still in flight from their memories of the war, and they are ready to blame either the Army or their country for what Vietnam did to them. Few seem willing to confront what they did to themselves in Vietnam.

Ultimately, the book is unsatisfying; although it revives multitudes of questions that most people would rather not face, it provides no clues about acceptable answers. Nonetheless, anyone tempted to advocate American involvement in another international struggle should read *Charlie Company;* it is a convincing demonstration of the futility of attempting to influence the hearts and minds of others before one's own mind is settled. Then we can deal with the really vexing question this book poses: Can liberty and democracy be preserved anywhere when provided with such equivocal leadership? □

# Marxian Cheerleaders & Quarterbacks

**Andrea Dworkin: *Right-wing Women;* Perigee Books; New York.**

***The Left Academy;* Edited by Bertell Ollman and Edward Vernoff; McGraw-Hill; New York.**

***Sport, culture and ideology;* Edited by Jennifer Hargreaves; Routledge & Kegan Paul; London.**

**by Gregory Wolfe**

In the last few years, a number of conservatives have been chortling about the alleged demise of liberalism. The argument goes like this: a conservative President, a vigorous conservative intellectual movement, and the liberals' loss of initiative and inspiration have combined to tip the American cultural balance away from the left. Unfortunately, the "decline" of liberalism is probably a function of the rhythm of politics, and conservatism remains a largely isolated, critical movement. These three books all testify to the untiring activity of far-left ideologues who are blissfully unaffected by the vicissitudes of liberal politics. Liberalism has always been a parasitic creature: the far left has been its conscience and its mentor. When liberals have awakened from their momentary stupor, they will once again hear the siren song of the left, which is increasingly seducing the soi-disant "educated" classes. In the intellectual war of attrition the present danger of leftist ideology is that it will bring about a kind of mental Finlandization. When conservatives can forestall this process, they will have reason to be proud, but not before.

The Marxist and feminist contributors to the books under consideration here agree in their interpretation of recent social history. The student and civil-rights unrest of the 1960's, they say, was primarily social, not intellectual, in origin. The real opening for the growth of radical thought came when liberal guilt about the criticism of traditional institutions led to the encouragement of left-wing endeavors. In discussing the development of Marxist scholarship in America, the writers in *The Left Academy* refer to books and studies the vast majority of which were published in the 1970's. Andrea Dworkin, radical feminist and lesbian, claims in *Right-wing Women* that the hippie generation's dream of "free love" only confirmed male sexual domination and led feminists in the 1970's to withdraw and formulate even more extreme theories of male "hegemony." In short, the radical left is fresh from a decade of unparalleled effort and, quite independently of liberal politics, is settling in as the American intellectual establishment.

The title of Andrea Dworkin's book is at best misleading, and at worst disingenuous. Only peripherally about "right-wing women," the book is in fact a lengthy feminist diatribe, the title merely an attempt to capitalize on the left's fear of fundamentalism (as in *Thunder on the Right).* When she singles out some right-wing women, Dworkin focuses primarily on Marabel Morgan, author of *The Total Woman,* and Anita Bryant, a sometime antihomosexual activist. Here most thoughtful conservatives would side with Dworkin: the saccharine fundamentalist piety which glorifies the role of housewife is simply too naive to be an adequate answer to the crisis of sexual identity. The low point of this kind of thinking was reached when Morgan counseled housewives on how to use Saran Wrap outside of the kitchen in order to please their husbands—all for the love of God. Phyllis Schlafly, on the other hand, is too intelligent and shrewd for Dworkin, so she calls Schlafly Machiavellian and leaves it at that. But this analysis is too facile, and Dworkin probably knows it, too; by attacking fundamentalists, she can throw out the whole Judeo-Christian world view which undergirds our understanding of sexuality with a sneer of contempt. It is like dismissing Christianity itself by examining Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell, rather than St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas.

Radical feminism is not an attitude but an ideology, in the full technical sense of the word. The world as it exists is seen as utterly illegitimate; only when the "revolution" comes can there be justice. Feminists see men as violent oppressors, incipient rapists; their theory of history is equally simple: men have always tyrannized women. Dworkin also insists on another central aspect of mod-

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ern ideology: the Party. There can be no compromise, and anyone who does not toe the radical feminist line is the Enemy; such "so-called feminism . . . cannot combat antifeminism because it has incorporated it." Like Marx, Dworkin is not clear about what comes after the revolution, which will apparently be brought about by such conventional means as the Equal Rights Amendment, changes in marriage law, and enforcement of equal-pay laws. Though women will be treated as being identical to men, Dworkin gives no indication of how the male nature might change. In the feminist utopia men must remain rapists, the only difference being that women will have political power and legal redress. It is a Hobbesian nightmare world, the war of all against all.

Feminism takes its toll on language. Dworkin persistently attempts to escape the reality of abortion by clouding the issue with obfuscating language: she doesn't even speak of a "fetus," only a "fertilized egg." Yet within days of conception such a term becomes meaningless. Marriage is "rape" (because it "inevitably" involves "forced sex"), and intercourse is a "f [—]." The aggression simmering beneath Dworkin's prose emerges even in the banal and petty spelling of "Amerika," the German (*read* nazi) spelling held over from the 1960's.

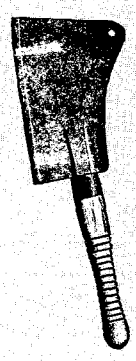
The plight of women in the 20th century has been hard. With the industrial society came the nuclear family, and with the men away at work there came the housewife. Much of the modern crisis of sexual identity stems from the breakdown of the distinction between the public and the private, for in the extended family the private realm was packed with meaning. Modern women have called the empty home "hell," only to find the working world "hell," something their husbands had been telling them about all along. Dworkin resents the exclusion of women from "history," which involves politics, wars, books, committees. But how much of what is true and good can be found in "history"? Conservatives like Burke and Johnson have stressed that the important things in life take place between the front and back doors.

Dworkin and other feminists write with a shudder about the violent sexual aggression of men. Yet they would be hypocrites if they did not admit that many women welcomed the shucking of sexual morality and the bonds of marriage as readily as did many men. The prime tenet of feminism, as Dworkin notes, is that everyone ought to "own" himself (except an unborn child); this is merely an extension of the modern cult of the self, which denies any moral or social obligations from without. Feminists want to abandon morality and at the same time be immune from evil. Ironically, this "selfism" locks men and women into an eternal struggle: men's selves wanting sex, and women's selves not wanting to be "possessed." If Dworkin and her comrades had real courage, they might suspect that the answers to their predicament lie in the direction of the "discredited" morality and the battered institution of marriage to which the men and women they so haughtily patronize still cling.

*The Left Academy* is a collection of essays by Marxist scholars in the social sciences. Though the essays are intended to be straightforward surveys of American Marxist thought in each discipline, the volume has a distinctly celebratory tone. According to the editors there are now over 400 university courses on Marxist philosophy and four Marxist-inspired political science textbooks; before 1970 there were none. Another indication of pervasive Marxist influence is that two recent presidents of the Organization of American Historians—William A. Williams and Eugene Genovese—were Marxists. The scholarly journals, newsletters, caucuses, and study groups are legion.

The appeal of Marxism for intellectuals stems from many sources, not all of which are unhealthy. The inroads made by positivism and empiricism on modern scholarship have led to the notion that knowledge should be "value-free," a kind of pure "objectivity" that contains no assumptions about God, man, and society other than the strictly "scientific." But the very idea of "value-free" science presupposes certain assumptions about man's capacity to know which are opposed to the classical and Christian philosophical synthesis. The traditional educational theory which emphasized piety toward inherited wisdom and institutions was replaced by a pseudo-objectivity which many students have found dry and lifeless. Marxism offers a scholarly approach rooted in certain values—albeit warped and irrational ones—to which students can commit themselves. Marxism becomes an ethical imperative tainted by a will to power. "What is needed first," say the contributors on psychology, "is not so much a better un-

### *Literature in America*



An ad created by Simon & Schuster, mainstream publishers, and printed in the *New York Times Book Review* announces a new work by a degenerate and cynical hack (who, when he fills out forms, probably puts *writer* in the space marked "Occupation"). The promo tells us that, among other things, the book includes:

> . . . the crucifixion of a black deaf-mute boy; a beheaded priest; another priest horribly mutilated in a District hospital.

The novel, we are informed, is a "Literary Guild Main Selection." Literary? In medieval Europe they at least had decency enough to call it the Butchers' Guild. □



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derstanding of what makes people tick (psychology), but instead a political commitment to human liberation."

The overall impact of Marxist thought has been to solidify and institutionalize the left's revolutionary animus. The continuing contradiction in Marxism—which the contributors to *The Left Academy* note with varying shades of anxiety—is that its theorists (drawn from the middle class) have no effect on the supposedly revolutionary working class. Alienated intellectuals dilate interminably upon theoretically alienated workers, who stubbornly refuse to reveal their malaise. Marx's failure as a prophet and his thoroughly 19th-century preoccupations lead Marxists to "revise" their master out of existence. One of the most common sentences in *The Left Academy* begins: "Despite the fact . . ." It is curious how little facts tend to trouble these "scientists."

It would be wrong to see the disparity between the Marxists' efforts and the recalcitrant working class in a purely comic light. The final irony of Marxism in the West is that if it ever comes to power, it will be imposed from above by an educated elite through the power of the state, with a lot of mumbo jumbo about democratic processes. However much Marxists may argue that the state is tainted by the capitalist class, they are inevitably drawn to the state as the most effective means of remaking society. As it filters down to the liberals, nothing much of Marxism remains but its collectivism and its antagonism to traditional institutions and mores.

*Sport, culture and ideology* is a good example of how Marxism is supplanting independent thought in social studies. Sports are obviously ripe for ideological attack: they are sexist (no women in major team sports), racist (when quotas aren't filled), capitalistic (competition, rules, advertising, etc.), and, of course, class determined. Leftists *could* make a good case against the rampant commercialization of professional team sports, which has increased player efficiency through specialization but has detracted from individual effort and skill. Oddly, the subject is hardly mentioned. Written and edited by British academics, *Sport, culture and ideology* concentrates more on violence and politics. Soccer in Britain is a working-class cult, and bloody fights and vandalism related to the major rivalries are common. The leftist interpretation, inspired by Marxism, sees this violence as a reflection of capitalist oppression, and holds that sports are supported by the capitalists because they channel aggression away from the class struggle. A more realistic analysis would see the tendency of modern sports to become cultist and violent in relation to the "bread and circuses" of Rome in its decline. The socialist welfare state, which enervates a people's capacity for creativity and satisfying work, and which subsists on a "philosophy of entitlement" wherein handouts and entertainment are considered "rights," causes sports to become a diversion from emptiness and a substitute for individual effort.

If there is little understanding of the condition of sports in the West on the part of the essayists, there is an outright stupidity in the evaluation of sports in communist countries. One essay concludes:

> . . . there has been an undeniable consistent aspiration and effort in the U.S.S.R., as in all socialist states, to make sport culturally uplifting, aesthetically satisfying and morally reputable which . . . has set a tone of altruism and devotion in sport in which there is much which cannot but be admired.

How many of the men and women who were taken away from their families at the age of five or six and sent to "sports schools" to be molded and regimented for the next 10 to 20, or more, years of their lives in order to become the sporting adjunct of communist imperialism would speak in terms of "altruism" and "devotion"? The fatuity of ideological thinking is a constant reminder of what the bird whispered to T. S. Eliot: "Mankind cannot bear much reality." □

# Rites, Rituals, and Receptions

**Jack Mitchley and Peter Spalding: *Five Thousand Years of Theatre;* Holmes & Meier; New York.**

**Lee Bliss: *The World's Perspective: John Webster and the Jacobean Drama;* Rutgers University Press; New Brunswick, NJ.**

**by Daniel N. Dickinson**

What is the theater? In a now well-known definition by drama expert Richard Southern cited in *Five Thousand Years of Theatre,* Southern said that theater, in fact all art, "is an address (in some form) by an individual to a number of people." This broad definition isn't too helpful when it's applied to, say, music or sculpture, but it does pin down something important when it comes to drama. Great theater has existed without scenery, without good scripts, without music, and even—as in mime—without words. But it is impossible without the actor. Boiled down to its essentials, theater is the act of *performance.*

The beginnings of theater are lost in prehistory. The first players, in all probability, were participants in rituals. Through the magic of incantations and charms, costumed savages became demons and deities, witches, wolves, and war gods. Ritual metamorphosed into more recognizable forms among the ancient Greeks; Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides fashioned religious dramas that may still be the premiere achievements in the tragic form. Somewhat later, the Romans, with Plautus and Terence,

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arranged a separation between theater and its metaphysical origins, with not completely satisfactory results. Over the course of time, theater has waffled back and forth between its ritualistic origins and the desires of its promoters to create a theater suitable for the moment.

Whether reaching back to its religious past, or storming the parapets of indifference for the latest cause célèbre, theater has always been the mirror of its time. Recalling the medieval jester, Shakespeare cuts quite near the core of theater when he has a character say:

> Invest me in my motley,
> Give me leave to speak my mind.

Theater speaks its mind not so much with the words it says but by the words it *chooses,* the scenery it displays, the buildings, if any, that it houses itself in, the gestures of its performers. Its medium is its message.

Thus, today's theater can serve as a paradigm for our time. What does it say? As might be expected, no single movement dominates the boards. Theater speaks with a multitude of voices. The absurdists decry the meaninglessness of existence while the Brechtians seek to score political points through alienation and didacticism. Meanwhile, those like Harold Pinter continue to explore the subtle nuances of character and language. Through this experimentation, the mass of people have responded, not to Ionesco and Genet, but to the plays of Neil Simon. While it is impossible to predict precisely where the theater is going, there is one certainty. No matter what shape or form it takes, the "Magic Circle" will continue to have a human center.

Theater takes the temperature of its time. During Shakespeare's youth and middle age, Elizabeth reigned. It was an era of expansion, enlightenment, exuberance, and Shakespeare's plays more than those of any other captured the essence of the age. Following Elizabeth's death, James I mounted the throne. A puritanical, unattractive, waspish ruler, he personified a great state's decline. England's power waned. Its taxes rose. The vistas of endless possibility that enticed Elizabethans seemed to retreat towards the horizon. As a darker, smaller, more pessimistic era took hold, a new drama rose to express the perceptions of the age's poets. It is this drama that Lee Bliss examines in *The World's Perspective.*

The greatest of the Elizabethan dramatists, Shakespeare, also proved to be the first of the major Jacobean ones. In plays such as *Measure for Measure, Antony and Cleopatra,* and *Coriolanus,* the Bard quickly sized up the possibilities lying in the new sense of disenchantment and forged them to serve his art. Whereas dramatic heroes such as Hamlet and Macbeth managed to maintain both nobility and even a certain positivism in their falls, what can we say for the vain Coriolanus, who tells us that he is:

> A thing
> Made by some other deity than nature
> That shapes man better.

Clearly, Coriolanus is no "sweet prince."

Whereas the tragic hero in Elizabethan Shakespeare gains stature and self-awareness through his attempts to scale impossible heights, the protagonists of Jacobean Shakespeare plays are far less likely to have learned anything of significance.

When Shakespeare left the theater in 1610, it marked the passing of an age, a termination dramatically symbolized when the Globe burnt down in the mid-

dle of a performance of the Bard's last play, *Henry VIII.* Happily for dramatic literature, a new playwright arose to take his place, a new author whose vision was more cynical, more conscribed, more despairing. His name was John Webster.

Virtually nothing is known about his life. Little is known about his works. Only three plays, *The White Devil, The Duchess of Malfi,* and *The Devil's Law Case* are definitely his. The last is a poorly constructed, entertaining trifle. The first two rest among the supreme accomplishments of world drama.

If Shakespeare and such minor scribes including John Marston and George Chapman suggested the Jacobean Weltanschauung, it was Webster who embodied it. In both *White Devil* and *Malfi* a Calvinistic world prevails. There is no nobility. Nor are there heroes. Most characters are motivated by greed, ambition, or lust. Even the protagonists, as Lee Bliss points out, are antiheroes who "spend their plays learning that they have a humanity to betray." And yet, despite the blackness of vision, there is hope. Hope in Webster's work is not the promise of salvation. It is, rather, the hope of understanding. For Webster, moral survival in the world is an illusion, a vanity. The only comprehension that matters is that which takes place in the world within. As Bliss says, "Webster dramatises the old paradox of strength and human potential bound with weakness." In other words, Webster deals with original sin. Given his times, Webster is honest. He does not pretend that mankind can overcome its limitations. However, he does not ignore those limits but posits that man can come to see what he is and why. That must suffice.

Webster's message is not attractive. Given the content of his drama, there can be little wonder that his plays are rarely seen. Yet it must be said that if the key figures of our age—the various utopians—had understood man's restrictions as well as his possibilities, this would have been a happier era. These times are not totally unlike Webster's; he speaks eloquently to both. □



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# Art and Egotism

**Ian Hamilton: *Robert Lowell: A Biography;* Random House; New York.**

**William Fifield: *In Search of Genius;* William Morrow; New York.**

**by Robert C. Steensma**

When the definitive history of 20th-century American poetry is eventually written, the work of Robert Lowell will probably occupy a prominent place in the discussion. From the appearance of his first volume, *Land of Unlikeness* (1944), to his last, *The Dolphin* (1973), Lowell was one of the most seriously and enthusiastically received poets of our time, and his influence on his contemporaries and followers was immense and occasionally destructive. Descendant of two eminent New England families and a convert to Roman Catholicism, he perhaps resembled his kinsman Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, a Civil War hero and the central figure in his "For the Union Dead":

> He has an angry wrenlike vigilance,
> a greyhound's gentle tautness;
> he seems to wince at pleasure,
> and suffocate for privacy.

Driven by his private demons of alcohol and disastrous marriages, haunted by memories of a failed father and a hard-driving mother, Lowell nevertheless dominated the generation of American poets after T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Robert Frost.

Ian Hamilton's biography of Lowell is a significant achievement. Trying to deal sympathetically but honestly with a psyche and genius as tortured as Lowell's is difficult enough—especially if the biographer avoids the trap of dime-store psychoanalysis—but the problem is compounded by Lowell's achievement, the breadth of his influence, and the shortness of our historical perspective. Other biographers have done it well (Carlos Baker's *Ernest Hemingway,* Arthur and Barbara Gelb's *O'Neill,* for example). This is biography with the "warts on," which holds the reader in fascinated ambivalence by a tangled web of achievement and personal horror. Hamilton, however, does not resort to exhibitionism and voyeurism, the hallmarks of both popular and scholarly biography today.

Lowell came early to literary prominence at the age of 27 with mixed reviews from several important critics. Arthur Mizener was disturbed that Lowell's "hysteria may be mistaken for directness, the accidental personal experience for the generally valid," while R. P. Blackmur suggested that in the early poetry "there is nothing loved unless it be its repellence . . . there is not a loving meter in the book." On the other hand, John Frederick Nims felt that the same poems were "an intricate counterpoint of form and diction, form and matter, feeling and idea." And so it was to continue for another 14 volumes of poetry produced during 23 years. By the time of his death in a New York taxi in 1977 at the age of 60 he was hailed in certain circles as the premier poet of his time and was the mentor of a large number of younger poets who imitated—often slavishly, badly—his form and content, strewing their pages with confessional poetry of the most tasteless kind.

Hellish marriages to Jean Stafford and Elizabeth Hardwick, both of them established writers, a dozen mental breakdowns and subsequent stays in institutions, and an unfortunate involvement in the Byzantine intellectual fraud of the antiwar movement during the Vietnam years, when his reputation and naiveté were exploited by the demagogues—all were symptomatic of a fragile genius for whom normal human relationships were at best difficult and at worst destructive. The *de profundis* of his personal life, however, often enhanced his creativity, and, as he hurtled through madness to death, he ironically assured his place in American letters.

But there was another dark side to his career. Surrounded by a circle of contemporaries who either lived off his weaknesses or were helpless to stop his descent into the maelstrom, he unwittingly encouraged the confessional and suicidal tendencies of some of his young apostles, notably Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, both of whom studied under him at Boston University. Lowell and the two women seemed to personify Rimbaud's demonic prescription that the poet must become "a seer by a long, im-

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## In the Mail

***Earthy Mysticism: Contemplation and the Life of Passionate Presence* by William McNamara; Crossroad; New York.** On the opening page the author says of the mystic: "He knows he is in exile on earth; but he also knows that his exile is erotic, so he makes the most of it." That's earthy.

***The U.S. Intelligence Community* by Stafford T. Thomas; University Press of America; Washington, D.C.** Once upon a time, there were *secret* agents. Now there are those, like Mr. Thomas, who examine the "intelligence community" and tell "what it *really* is like, what it *really* does."

***Contexts of Behavior: Anthropological Dimensions* by Robert J. Maxwell; Nelson-Hall; Chicago.** Anthropology, thanks to a certain French structuralist, has become all the rage lately. Pointing out that man lives in natural and artificial environments, however, is not enough to carry a text on a modish subject.



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mense, and deliberate derangement of all the senses." Plath's poetry was a kind of fever chart which traced the course of her own psychic dissolution, and Sexton's morbid concern with drugs, abortion, suicide, and menstruation showed the influence of an unstable master upon his apprentices, who seemed to be asking, in lines from one of Lowell's last poems, "Sufferer, how can you help me,/ if I use your sickness/ to increase my own?" Or, as Lowell wrote of the deaths of his parents, "not until death parts us,/ will I stop sucking my blood from their hurt."

Even so, the great-great nephew of James Russell Lowell and the distant cousin of Amy Lowell managed often enough to escape from his madness and the social chaos of the friends and poetasters who clung to him by writing poetry that remains hauntingly fresh and evocative. Drawing upon his New England heritage and his Catholicism, he developed a poetry characterized by stylistic boldness, disciplined and exquisite language, delicate balance of form and content, and, unfortunately, angry confessionalism. Poems such as "Colloquy in Black Rock," "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket," "Falling Asleep over the Aeneid," "Sailing Home from Rapallo," "Skunk Hour," "For the Union Dead," and a dozen others will become minor classics. On the other hand, some of his work is marked by excessive rhetoric, overly ripe introspection, and a compulsion to resolve in poetry his own conflicts and those of a world caught in its own political and materialistic madness.

Lowell and his literary friends were another lost generation. Delmore Schwartz, Randall Jarrell, and John Berryman saw themselves at odds with their culture, but they also craved all of the material pleasures that it offered to them. Cut adrift from any spiritual resources and uncertain about what they really wanted, they seemed, in Berryman's phrase, to be "cross with god who has wrecked this generation." Or, as Eileen Simpson, Berryman's widow, reminds us in her recent *Poets in Their Youth,* "They would recite one another's poems and talk for hours on end, free at last of the worldly concerns about where the next advance, the next drink, the next girl or even the next inspiration would come from—free at last to be obsessed with poetry." Their geniuses were freed, but to what end? It's hard to say.

Genius such as Lowell's—as well as that of more stable people—continues to fascinate us. "Great wits," Dryden once wrote, "are sure to madness near allied,/And their partitions do their bounds divide." *In Search of Genius,* by William Fifield, a novelist and former Hollywood screenwriter, makes one believe that Dryden wasn't far wrong. This book purports to be a series of "intimate conversations" over a dozen years between Fifield and contemporary artists including Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Jean Giono, Joan Miro, Robert Graves, Roberto Rossellini, Salvador Dali, Marc Chagall, Jean Lurcat, and Marcel Marceau. Rambling, redundant, at times almost incoherent, and unfailingly egocentric, these exchanges swirl in and out of focus like wisps of smoke. Occasional perceptive observations about art and genius sink under the weight of word-mongering and artistic posturing. As Fifield admits, "artists are very unreliable informants on their art, there being concealment, intentional distortion for manifold reasons, the interaction of the artwork and the man."

Fifield doesn't help clarify things. Instead of a reasoned and orderly inquiry into the sources, characteristics, and uses of genius, he provides a loose series of nasty backbitings and stagy comments which may cater to a taste for the sensational but which leave little to stimulate the mind. Shakespeare's phrase from the first part of *Henry IV* best describes Fifield's conversations: "bald unjointed chat." Cocteau, for example, tartly remarks that the qualities of genius are "egotism, cruelty, anguish at human contacts, disinterestedness, amorality, a violent taste for the pleasures of the earth," an observation that should surprise no one who has observed our present art and literature. Dali humbly observes that "Genius is Dali," and Picasso says that genius is "individuality plus two sous of talent." Giono tries to cut Hemingway and Americans down to his own size: "He was not a novelist; he was a journalist. But Americans cannot appreciate the romanesque as they have no culture. Literature is a cultural expression, which therefore Americans cannot understand." And Robert Graves dismisses one of the greatest poets in the English language by saying that "Milton's poetry is constipated."

Fifield's collection may lead the unwary into believing that genius is characterized by jealousy, bitterness, egotism, xenophobia, sexual kinkiness, ignorance, alcoholism, political naiveté, and even criminality. While one or more of these traits may be found in a genius of any period or culture, there have always been more common characteristics, namely a commitment to society and a determination to look behind the surface of things, as well as the ability to create and communicate. Outrageous behavior, as with Norman Mailer, or sociopolitical sensationalism, a la Ralph Nader, is not the mark of a genius; it is merely the sign of a poseur.

Those who label themselves as geniuses, or allow their groupies to do it for them, are enthusiasts in the 18th-century sense, claiming to have a special religious, social, or political vision denied to anyone outside their narrow group. These were the people that Swift satirized and parodied so brilliantly in *A Tale of a Tub,* those hacks and religious hypocrites who, like Fifield's subjects, burble on and on about themselves, each thinking like Swift's madman that it is in his "power to reduce the notions of all mankind exactly to the same length, and breadth, and height of his own."

Analyzing genius is frustrating. We know it when we see it in a Robert Lowell, but we can't explain it. About all we can do is believe, with Keats, that "works of genius are the first things in this world." □



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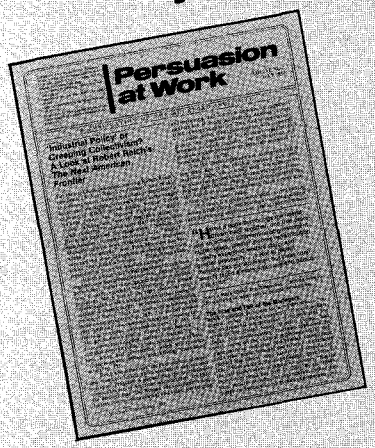


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# Amazon Adventures

**Paule Marshall: *Praisesong for the Widow;* G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.**

**Susan Monsky: *Midnight Suppers;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.**

**Rebecca Hill: *Blue Rise;* William Morrow; New York.**

**by Diane Long Hoeveler**

These three novels reveal both how far the "woman's novel" has come, and yet how far it has to go before it speaks to readers about universal concerns. Each of these novels is primarily concerned with exploring the ambiguities implicit in being daughter, wife, or mother to male figures who are at best misguided, at worst oppressive. And each of the heroines supposedly triumphs at the conclusion, earns her victory by rejecting either the patriarchal values of society or the more subtle tyranny of the family structure. The implication is that there can be no easy relationships for the woman who realizes herself as an individual. Freedom for these authors consists in liberating oneself from the constricting definitions and roles that society, religion, and family impose on women.

Despite the individual artistic merit of each novel, one cannot help but notice a certain myopia in the authors' viewpoints. Paule Marshall's heroine Avey Johnson (her real name being Avatara, symbolic of her identity as the black female bourgeoisie) undergoes a spiritual quest that includes a mystical call to reject the white values she and her husband so fiercely embraced in order to escape the poverty of the black ghetto. After deserting a Caribbean cruise (archetypal symbol of the white corruption and usurpation of Afro-Caribbean life), she finds herself descending into an underworld of black native culture of the Caribbean. Her spiritual guide is a black native who has stayed in touch with his African heritage; he attempts to recover Avey's black identity by taking her to the "Big Drum," a series of native dances done in honor and memory of the "Old Parents," the "Long-time People." After a purgation and reliving of her past life through dreams and memories, Avey is ready to reclaim her African past and join in the circular dance that comes to her effortlessly, instinctively. Her salvation, after she returns to white society, will continue as she operates a camp and sanctuary for her own grandchildren and other black children who will be taught about their ancestors and their Pan-African heritage.

The heroines of *Midnight Suppers,* a Jewish mother and daughter in the South, find their identities both oppressive and liberating. Because they are the periphery of a periphery, they have the freedom to break and make laws as they see fit. And so the mother has a long-standing affair with her husband's business partner, which causes her husband and daughter more than a little anguish. Triangular relationships mark every encounter in this book; even the dead first wife and son of the husband figure prominently in a novel that suggests that every human arrangement requires multiple others as buffers against the pain of encounter. The daughter, unsure of her paternity, distances herself from all three parent figures, capturing and freezing them in the photographs she is exhibiting of her life in the South. But coming to terms with her heritage also means accepting the pain of loss and the reality of death, so she names her first son for her dead father and his son who died at birth. All the characters' biblical names—Esther, Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca—serve as reminders that the Jewish heritage is a vital and strong presence that speaks of suffering and isolation, promises kept and promises broken. A Jew in the South, in Monsky's perception, is as much an outsider as Paule Marshall's blacks are throughout the country. What neither author conveys is that alienation and the perception of isolation is a *human* experience, certainly not limited to a particular religious or ethnic group.

Rebecca Hill presents her novel about a woman's decision to get a divorce against the backdrop of rural Mississippi. A woman who has forsaken her Southern Baptist upbringing in favor of marriage and a life in Des Moines comes home to seek her widowed mother's approval for the divorce she desires from a man her mother can see only as a good man, a good provider. In a series of vignettes that explore the options available to Southern women, Ms. Hill presents all women as victimized by their own dependence on men who are conditioned to deceive and abuse them. But it is the mother-daughter relationship that is the focal point of this study of familial desperation. In trying to understand her mother's devotion to a husband who beat his children, the daughter tries to justify her own decisions and failures. Since she married a man as unlike her father as possible, she realizes that she still has not taken responsibility for her own life. She says at the end of the novel: "I am finished believing that there is salvation by relationship." But the opposite, she must admit, might also be valid. As an adult, she can no longer continue to blame her unhappiness and failures on her relationships with others.

"Monsky . . . has succeeded in writing a novel about her subject, instead of an exemplary case history."

—*Village Voice*

*Ms. Hoeveler teaches at a prep school in Milwaukee.*



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Now these brief plot summaries do not do justice to the undeniable artistry that these novels possess. The narrative voice in each is clear, engaging, and suggestive of the complex nuances of human emotion. But the depiction of the women themselves, as heroines or as secondary characters, causes one to marvel at each woman's naiveté. For instance Marshall's heroine mourns, in a long dream-memory sequence, the corruption of her life and her husband's. Where once they had danced to the seductive strains of black jazz singers and accepted their poverty, they can no longer do so after the arrival of three children. Now they must struggle to achieve financial success, the husband returning to college in his thirties and establishing an accounting firm. Her work as a civil servant enables them to purchase a home in a white suburb, thereby achieving the status and security that have become their goals. But she sees this success as having been bought with her soul—specifically, her black soul. In denying the heritage she knew as a child in the black South and in embracing the "white" values of work and money, she has become spiritually dead. But surely all adults look back nostalgically on the lighthearted pastimes of their youth, activities in which they were free to indulge because they did not have the responsibilities of raising and supporting children. And surely working to support oneself is not an inherently dehumanizing activity forced on one by "white" values. It seems that Ms. Marshall wants to have it both ways: she wants to condemn the wealth and leisure work can provide, but without that wealth and leisure one would not even have the luxury of an identity crisis.

And what about the Jewish women? The mother wants only to be supported and so she marries an older widower who is a successful pediatrician. But she always feels that she is sharing him with his late first wife. She turns to her husband's medical partner for comfort, and they continue for the next 30 years a

## LIBERAL CULTURE

### *Neo-Mothers*

Human follies are, of course, unfathomable and as old as the earth, thus the latest fad of fatherless conceptions and "families" is new only in a technological sense. That sometimes a woman has to assume sole responsibility for her family because a man has deserted her, perished in a war, or otherwise made her suddenly a widow is not new. What's *new* is the sociocultural propaganda advocating solitary motherhood in the face of life's dilemmas and perils, and the demented contempt of man as a positive component of a woman's existence and of the family's spiritual welfare. The recent trend of bringing up children without fathers is a direct offspring of the feminist mystique, and the militantly trendy *New York* magazine recently scrutinized the phenomenon in a long feature oozing with inane admiration for "these unwed mothers [who] are exploring uncharted territory."

The foremost message that the *New York* story conveys to an unprejudiced mind is that human consciousness, perception, and self-evaluation can sink into a freakish abyss under pressure from cultural fashions. A woman who, to satisfy her yen to be the "vice-president of one of the largest Madison Avenue public-relations agencies" and have a fatherless child at the same time, "casually drop[s] her baby" of 18 months in a junkie-infested area with "ten kids in [a] small, filthy room" on 14th Street (Manhattan's idea of a child-care center), explains her moral stance:

> As a city kid, she'll have to fend for herself. I grew up in a very sheltered environment, and I want it to be different for my children.

In her feminist barbarity she seems unaware (a vice-president of a Madison Avenue firm, mind you) that even primates do not expect their offspring to fend for themselves at that stage of infancy.

This kind of nonchalant attitude is heartily supported by mindlessly modish scientists, such as one Martin Cohen, a "clinical psychologist . . . on the faculty of New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center," who says about out-of-wedlock births:

> I don't think it's a bad thing at all.

The infinite agglomeration of sorrows, torments, despairs, and neuroses that must result from the engineering of human fate that he so callously endorses in the name of "progress," "change," or socioeconomic conditioning obviously means nothing to him. He reaches an apex of cruel idiocy by promulgating:

> [Woman's] relationship with a man is based on issues like power, sex, and sharing.

It's a strange, lobotomized psychology they must be teaching these days at Cornell: the word "love" has disappeared from their lexicon.

*New York* next presents a sad grotesquerie: fatherless children being produced with the help of artificial insemination. One of the pioneer mothers is reported to have "checked off her genetic preference on a one-page chart." She then "paid $430 to be artificially inseminated four times." Her past sexual activities, a series of one-night stands, *New York* calls with inimitable suavity her "social life." Thereby, the magazine enters that specious area of approval via publicity, where what is "objectively" featured in the press is actually promoted as a commodity, fashion, lifestyle. Perhaps the best summation of the entire subject is provided by that imbecilic Madison Avenue public-relations vice-president:

> People may think my life is crazy, but these babies are products of a brave new world.

She seems unaware that Aldous Huxley intended his title to express condemnation, bitterness, fear, rage, contempt, and mockery. □



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sporadic affair. Is this affair a matter of convenience or great love? One is forced to conclude that human beings have a way of justifying their needs in such a way that they can accept their own duplicity (others have gone over this same terrain very thoroughly before). A woman is lonely, feels neglected by her husband and jealous of his first wife, so she adds another triangle to an already triangular relationship. Later she maneuvers her daughter into acting as a mediator in the parents' ménage. It seems to be simply a case of prolonged adolescence; like a jealous child, the woman amasses love the way children hoard blocks. If this Jewish mother is meant to be a sympathetic character (and I think Ms. Monsky intends her so), her enigmatic morality is, at best, difficult. She may justify her amorality to herself, but one doubts that others will find her conduct anything but pathetically neurotic.

The third heroine is a woman seen only in relation to other people. When she tries to be alone she is constantly interrupted by visitors or phone calls; she represents the reality of women as helpmeets, servants for family and friends. Again we see an adult woman, the mother of a five-year-old daughter, returning home to her mother for support and approval. There are powerful and wrenching scenes between mother and daughter, but most of them tend to read like slightly fictionalized narrations from psychology textbooks. She wants very much to understand how her mother could have endured for so many years a marriage that was demeaning and oppressive; at the same time, she wants her mother to approve of her plans for a divorce. When her mother refuses to cooperate, she sulks and rages and wallows in guilt and anger, the responses of a child. None of her familial relations, in fact, prove particularly supportive. When she goes dancing with a cousin, she is shocked and repulsed by his sexual advances. After confiding in a divorced female cousin about her own sexual problems, she later discovers that this cousin is having an affair with the husband of her own best friend. There are many such sordid episodes, episodes designed to evoke rage and pity for the lot of women today. But in all this the reality of choice is omitted. Most marriages these days are events of free choice, and one does rather tire of women (and men) who refuse to accept the consequences of their own actions.

If each of these novels is a "woman's novel," one must conclude that women are still exploring the theme of female victimization in a male-dominated society. But if women are victims, how much does the victim collaborate with the victimizer? None of these women accept much responsibility for their own lives. What realities do women need to face before they have the freedom and equality they want? Don't we all, male and female, black and white, ultimately have a similar goal: trying to make sense of the chaotic realities around us. □

# No Time for Saints

**Mary Gilligan Wong: *Nun: A Memoir;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.**

**by Edward N. Peters**

It is not easy to offer interesting commentary on a boring book. And *Nun,* more than informative or scandalous, is boring. Mary Gilligan Wong's memoir—something between a diary and a psychotherapeutic notebook—may be of interest to Mary Gilligan Wong, but it will hardly interest anyone else. Modestly, Wong opens with the moving Anouilh soliloquy in which St. Thomas à Becket explains why he chose to leave the abbey and return to public life; Wong apparently feels her situation and Becket's to be analogous. But whereas Becket gave up the quiet contemplation of God, leaving a life of utter poverty, Wong gave up pizzerias and apartment living, group-encounter sessions and dates with former priests. And while Becket went to a life of righteous strife and eventual murder in the cathedral, Wong went to practice psychology in California and (to judge from a photo on the *Nun* dustcover) to frolic on the beach with a husband and two children. Becket made his decision in a spirit of sacrifice and love, Wong made hers out of disillusionment and contempt. Thus does analogy become pretension.

Not surprisingly, Wong's memoirs are nearly devoid of serious intellectual content. For example, in a brief history of her religious order, Wong suggests that the French Revolution exposed a whole generation to "cynicism and disbelief." And one can only smile at Wong's account of a friend's chastisement for what Wong described as the latter's attempt at intellectual development—reading *Newsweek.* Is such a source of sagacity seriously to be considered when it later opines that the Baltimore catechism was an "obvious" failure, or that it would be a "travesty" to teach basic Church doctrine to high school teenagers more interested in trendy social theory?

Not all of her observations are of such a general nature; her favorite subject is herself. Wong thinks it important to note that in convent dining rooms, if one leaves one's coffee cup upside down it means one does not want coffee. She recalls that in her first elementary school teaching assignment she had many classes, short lunch breaks, and little time to get to know individual students. And several tedious pages are devoted to an account of her first trip to a beauty salon. Now, at the risk of betraying some insensitivity to a young girl's discovery of table etiquette, a young teacher's first taste of professional frustration, or a young woman's experimentation with

*Mr. Peters is an adviser to the Young Catholic Committee.*



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personal appearance, one can't help but think that the only interesting thing about any of these events is the fact that *Wong* thinks the reader would be interested in them. Even Wong's style is unimaginative, overworking the simple present to describe past events:

> After a week in Cincinnati to pack my things and say my goodbyes, I go to Chicago to begin my first year of teaching high school. I immediately love the big old building in which I will live . . .

So the book is boring. But we cannot simply let the matter drop there, for Wong purports to offer an account of Catholic religious life in the 1960's. Thus, one might expect an intelligent and fair account of that life from "one who knows." How does Wong fare on this count? Not very well. For one who was born and raised Catholic, who spent years in Catholic schools as both student and teacher, and who now presumes to tell the world what being a Catholic nun was like, Wong displays surprising misunderstandings of Catholic principles and practice.

Some of her errors are harmless. For example, Wong thinks the pink candle of the traditional Advent wreath is lit on *Gaudete* Sunday, which is correct, but that *Gaudete* Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Advent, which is wrong (it is the third Sunday). A small mistake, to be sure, and one probably shared by the majority of Catholics in this country, but it demonstrates a certain failure toward the goal of *sentire cum ecclesiá.* Wong's other transgressions are more serious. Analysis is hampered, though, by her frequently mocking tone, which leaves one quite unsure as to whether she really believes what she is saying or is simply repeating some half-formed notion of theology picked up as a child. This approach shifts the onus to the reader to ferret out the Catholic truth from the muddled presentation. Consider the following:

> Here was [an elderly dying sister] who had dedicated her whole life to God, yet her fate for all eternity depended on the state of her soul at the moment of death.

Disregarding her critical tone, Wong has stated Catholic doctrine correctly. The fault lies in her unwillingness to explain, or even consider, the Catholic rationale for the principle after casting it in a disparaging light. Wong might have explained the Church teaching that one may, up to the moment of death, by the use of one's free will, reject God and His love. If one dies in the state of this self-imposed separation, that decision, just like all the rest of life's decisions, becomes irrevocable. But Wong lapses into error when she continues: "and the state of [sister's] soul depended on Liz getting the priest there in time for a last confession." Reduced to its essentials, Wong is asserting that the state of one's soul depends upon the action or inaction of another. This is false; one is responsible for the state of one's own soul. That a comparatively small number of dying people exercise that responsibility—quite laudably—by asking a priest to hear a final confession in no way implies that the state of the soul of a dying person depends on the presence or absence of a priest. Wong alludes several times to the efforts of the sisters "to merit heaven." No informed religious, however, would speak this way. None of us, Wong should know, can *earn* our way to heaven.

So Mary Gilligan Wong's book is boring *and* misinformed. But ever since the appearance of *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk,* another question inevitably occurs about such writings: Are they scandalous? The answer depends on two factors. The first is whether one considers smoking in the bathroom or talking after hours to be scandalous. This is about the worst Wong can recall from those days during which she was, presumably, trying to lead the life of a religious. The second factor turns on how one views Wong's behavior *after* she abandoned the religious life. Even this behavior is hardly racy stuff, at least by worldly standards—though it is dishonorable enough for those with a calling to something higher. After leaving habit and convent behind, Wong shared space in boardinghouses with other drifting religious—male and female. There they rolled up the carpet and danced and exchanged silly adolescent love letters. Wong enjoys the presence of priests who go by their first names and refer to older sisters as "bitches," and thinks that brushing the arm of a priest during their date to a pizzeria was electrifying. Strictly high school, this.

But in the midst of such mediocrity, one telling event takes place; not scandalous, but perhaps revealing. Wong, who, at this point, has chosen not to remain in the religious life and who harbors heavy resentment against other religious, nevertheless accepts her election as a representative to an important post-Vatican II general chapter meeting of her Order, a meeting which will largely direct its future development and way of life. Wong explains it thus: "I haven't actually decided to *leave* but only to *allow* myself that option." But a few days later, she is gone.

> *"Nun* is the eloquent . . . account of Wong's indoctrination into rigid convent life . . . that systematically stripped Wong of healthy sexuality and her instincts toward feminism, independence, and personal ambition."
>
> —*Ms.*

It is easy, in the midst of the present turmoil, to forget that the Church has suffered nearly every hardship possible in her 2000 years, remaining, in Chesterton's graphic phrase, "reeling but erect." Even Mary Gilligan Wong, on a return visit to her old convent, finds herself rediscovering its ancient treasures:

> Now I watch the bent-over little old nun next to me, her arthritic hands twisting around the songbook as she struggles to read the words of these



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new-fangled songs, and wish with everything in me that someone would give her back her 'Ave Maria' and her 'Tis the Month of Our Mother.' Remembering my days in the choir, I wish with everything in me that I could hear again a Latin Mass impeccably sung, or a crystal-clear Gregorian chant. Did I ever think I'd be so nostalgic?

Cynical? Perhaps. But it may also be a sign of growth. And growth—which John Henry Cardinal Newman once termed the only criterion of life—even if delayed, is still growth. □

# Sightless Perceivers

***The Secular Mind: Transformations of Faith in Modern Europe;* Edited by W. Warren Wagar; Holmes & Meier; New York.**

**by Glenn N. Schram**

Written as a festschrift in honor of Franklin L. Baumer, intellectual historian at Yale, by a group of his former students, this volume is of interest to the general public for two main reasons—the introduction and a chapter on apocalypticism in contemporary literature by Professor Wagar, and the basic attitudes of the writers toward the secularization of Western culture. Most of the chapters, though apparently competent, are on small and occasionally arcane topics of interest only to specialists. One other item of general interest is the foreword by Jaroslav Pelikan, who, though the fact is not mentioned, combines the roles of confessing Lutheran and Dean of the Graduate School at Yale. He is also a church historian. It is in this capacity that he wrote the foreword where, alone among the contributors, he expresses an awareness of the effect of educators on students and thus on society. He writes: "The intellectual conclusions of one generation may become the moral presuppositions of the next, and it behooves us to consider the potential consequences of what we say and think and do."

Whether Professor Baumer always followed this advice is questioned unconsciously by Frank M. Turner and the Rev. Jeffrey von Arx, S.J., in a chapter entitled "Victorian Ethics of Belief: A Reconsideration." Here they report that "Franklin Baumer in the late 1960s asked his students to compose a letter purportedly written in the 1870s by an English university student explaining to his father why he could not take Holy Orders." One wonders why it was essential that impressionable undergraduates gain empathic understanding of the spiritual crisis of a 19th-century student and thereby be led to question whatever faith they might have. Why could they not have written on, say, the conversion experience of somebody influenced by a Methodist circuit rider or by the Tractarian movement in the Church of England?

This same almost casual attitude toward secularization characterizes Professor Baumer's students' contributions to this book. Professor Wagar, in his introduction, concedes that we seem to be living in more secular times than our ancestors did. The concession occurs after the rehearsal of a debate on what secularization is and whether it has in fact occurred in the West. Professor Wagar would have spared himself considerable effort if he had merely stipulated as a definition the one he quotes from David Martin, the British sociologist and liturgical traditionalist. Secularization, according to Professor Martin, is the decline of religious beliefs and institutions, given that *religious* refers to "an acceptance of a level of reality beyond the observable world known to science, to which are ascribed meanings and purposes completing and transcending those of the purely human realm."

Secularization is often considered to be part of the process of modernization, and Professor Wagar maintains that "the turning of the balance" from premodern to modern occurred in both Europe and America between 1830 and 1870—a position which he claims to share with Martin E. Marty, the liberal church historian at the University of Chicago. It is unclear what "turning of the balance" could mean, particularly when Professor Wagar admits that "the beginnings of the secularization of consciousness can be followed back to the Renaissance, and even before." The unclear statement did, however, earn the introduction praise as "masterful" by Professor Marty in *The Christian Century.*

Both in his introduction and in his chapter on literary apocalypticism, Pro-

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fessor Wagar recognizes modern Western man's persistent vision of the emergence of a state of moral perfection on earth; he seems to be unaware that Eric Voegelin, the political philosopher, has already dealt with the phenomenon, calling the attempt to bring about such a state an act of rebellion against God. Voegelin labeled the attempt "gnostic," and showed how, carried to its ultimate extreme, it ends up in totalitarian dictatorship. Professor Wagar underestimates the significance of the apocalyptic events, sometimes followed by secular counterparts of a new heaven and a new earth, and sometimes not, which have been portrayed by the popular-entertainment industry in this country in recent years. Such portrayals feed on growing anxieties and eschatological yearnings and cannot be dismissed simply (and tendentiously) as the product of a vision of the end of "imperial monopoly capital and the armed national state."

Equally easy attitudes characterize the writers in general in their treatment of secularization. It is as if, artistically minded though some of them are, they had never wondered about the cultural implications of works like Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus,* a seminal work that was inspired by the music of Arnold Schönberg; the writer and the musician were perceptive in a manner that few are today in the West. The works of both artists reflect the spiritual crisis which, along with deep anxieties and eschatological longings of the sort now brewing in America, produced National Socialism. The latter was, in turn, an extreme form of the gnosticism which, in milder versions, has marked secularized Protestant culture in America for decades and is now infiltrating the Catholic Church in the forms of pacifism and liberation theology as avant-garde thinkers redirect their eschatological hope away from the Last Judgment and heaven and toward earthly utopias. In the process they create a widespread psychological state conducive to the emergence of a radically gnostic political movement. About these matters the authors are silent. □


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COMMENDABLES

# The Orient Egress

**Richard Grenier:** ***The Marrakesh One-Two;*** Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Pope John Paul II and the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini have little more in common than species. This was made most evident when the Pope was on his visit to Poland last June. While he was speaking out against the oppression of the Polish people, Tehran radio reported that Khomeini was speaking out against the Pope. It was the same old story: "Great Satan" America. Khomeini reportedly said that the Pope, "instead of condemning America for its crimes against humanity and arousing his followers to confront the oppressors, supports America and suggests to the other oppressed people that they coöperate with it." Imagine that. Meanwhile, members of the Palestine Liberation Organization (sic) were attacking their head, Yassir Arafat, who, in turn, lashed out at Libyan leader Moamar Khadafy, whom Arafat said was behind the PLO revolt. At the same time, people in Lebanon were shooting at Syrians. The war continued between Iran and Iraq. Etc., etc., etc. How can Westerners in general and Americans in particular deal with people like Khomeini, Arafat, Khadafy, and countries and organizations that simultaneously pretend to a common front and shoot at each other? That question is essayed by Richard Grenier in a delightful romp through the countries of the Middle East. His answer isn't the one commonly voiced on television and published in newspapers and magazines. Grenier, regular film critic for *Commentary,* sets up the quixotic adventure by using another land that's equally foreign to most: Hollywood. A film company, attempting to make Islam's explanation to the West, *Mohammed Superstar,* is summarily kicked from country to country as it goes in search of sand, camels, and, most importantly, money.

There are those—critic Edward W. Said, most notably (vide *Orientalism)*—who claim that the West co-opted and distorted the Middle East during the 19th century as Oriental studies were established: such programs incorrectly codified the countries under study, and therefore Westerners have it all wrong. Perhaps Sir Richard Francis Burton, British explorer and Orientalist, and his like set people in the West on the wrong track, but Grenier follows no one: no more evidence than his first-person narrator—a young, long-haired American screenwriter who unapologetically assists the CIA—is needed to prove that. As Grenier deftly shows, the Islamic Weltanschauung is different than the Judeo-Christian one of the West, in both physical (e.g., the slicing off of portions of a person's anatomy for purposes of punishment) and philosophical (take your pick) ways. The species is the same. But Kipling was correct. □

# Yesterday Today

***Twentieth-Century American Historians, Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 17;*** Edited by Clyde N. Wilson; Gale Research Co.; Detroit.

Fidelity to truth is an impossibility for the historian, if a historian's task is seen as making a complete record of past events. That is, as Laurence Sterne showed with his *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy,* it is virtually impossible for an individual to record merely the events of his own life since while he is making that record, other events are occurring; even if one were to catch up, one's "history" couldn't be written unless the postmortem were counted, and it, of course, wouldn't be by the hand of the historian. The power of selection in history is an imperious one. Thus it behooves any student of history to find out about the history of the historians so that an understanding of what criteria were used by the historian can be developed. A fine work for this purpose, one that covers 59 American historians who concentrate(d) on American

history, has been edited by Dr. Wilson. The essays presented are thorough and well illustrated. Although this is a reference book undoubtedly designed with libraries in mind, it is a collection suited for the serious student of history. □

# The Light Touch

**Georges Simenon:** ***Aunt Jeanne;*** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.

**Georges Simenon:** ***Maigret Afraid;*** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.

Almost by definition or convention, detective and mystery stories are characterized by violence and excitement: not only is a crime perpetrated, typically murder(s), but the characters are put through frantic or otherwise unusual paces. Even the dapper Sir Peter Wimsey works up some perspiration on occasion. Raymond Chandler once said that when he got into a bind with Marlowe and didn't know what to write next, he had someone throw a punch. Thus, the use of action can be an out for the writer, an accessible path. Similarly, it is a guideway for the reader. That is, unless the story is one by someone like Robbe-Grillet, the odds are that there will be a solution to the case. The author must make it worth one's while to move from point A, the discovery of the mystery, to point Z, the denouement, without skipping the 24 points in between. Some might argue that the masterful writer of detective stories relies on the readers to be captivated by the ratiocinative abilities of the sleuth and nothing else (assuming, of course, that said operative isn't from Mike Hammer's mold). While there is something to that, its complete validity can be laid to rest with two words: "Quick, Watson!"

There are, by nature, exceptions, and in the genre under discussion the exception takes the form of the invariably slim volumes produced by Georges Simenon. Simenon is most widely known for his semiquiescent Maigret. However, the number of books he has produced is ex-



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pressed in three digits; not all of his works deal with the police inspector. One, for example, is *Aunt Jeanne,* which first probes then delineates the feelings of a deteriorating family that resides in a French village. It is the stuff of mainstream literature (i.e., incorrectly assuming that the detective story is an illegitimate line, an assumption shown to be fallacious by a certain Detective Oedipus). Simenon's forte is description. He selects details—physical and psychological—that are apt: no more, no less. He is masterful at that. While he is clearly expressing himself with prose in the novels, that prose has the evocative power of poetic language.

In the various Maigret tales the police officer does very little of a physical nature, certainly nothing frantic or unusual. The title *Maigret Afraid,* for example, might indicate to an uninitiated reader that the character is put into a life-threatening situation: held by a ruthless band of Parisian thugs, perhaps. However, the fear is actually a *slight* feeling of anxiety brought on by the Chief Inspector's realization that he is growing old, that his eclectic methods will be overtaken by scientific uniformity. One of the most astonishing things in the novel is Maigret's acceptance of a cigar. Still, Georges Simenon has held—and will continue to hold—readers enthralled for years with his deft subtlety which does not date. □

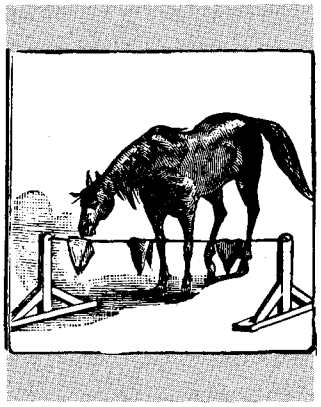
## IN FOCUS

# Media Menace

**John G. Adams: *Without Precedent: The Story of the Death of McCarthyism;*** W. W. Norton; New York.

Apolitical thugs in New York City typically subdue their prey with a club, switchblade, or cheap handgun. Liberal journalists in the Big Apple and elsewhere prefer a more lethal weapon: they beat their victims senseless with the name of Joe McCarthy. Naturally, those who are sufficiently tolerant of leftist subversion, terrorism, and espionage need not fear such assault, but just let anyone hint that the threat of communism must be opposed not only militarily but also intellectually, culturally, and politically and he will immediately be bludgeoned by a mob of commentators, columnists, and pundits all screaming with melded outrage and glee: "McCarthyism! McCarthyism!"

Only national amnesia permits contemporary journalists to brandish McCarthy's name so menacingly, however, since it was the media themselves who made him a potent force in American politics in the first place. As John Adams observes in *Without Precedent,* McCarthy's power was underwritten by editors who trumpeted his unsubstantiated charges in headlines and reporters who were "too lazy to check the facts." Only the force of "a strange media machine . . . fueled by hot air and printer's ink" could transform an uncouth Wisconsin senator with no real political convictions into a national power. McCarthy's "anticommunism" was never anything but successful grandstanding: he conducted his red-baiting "hearings" not because they uncovered spies (he never caught one) but because they captured front pages. In an open society, such tactics must eventually be exposed. In McCarthy's case the turning point was the Army-McCarthy confrontation of



1953-54 in which Mr. Adams was a key participant as Army counselor under Robert T. Stevens. For this he deserves the nation's sincere thanks. He deserves somewhat less for his book about his efforts. Little more than a detailed record of his own involvement in the much-publicized imbroglio, punctuated with confident judgments on the characters of the other principals involved and narrated with self-congratulation tinged with self-pity, Adams's book fails to analyze the larger cultural and political ramifications of the McCarthy debacle.

It is particularly ironic that in a study which repeatedly quotes from Michael Straight (a recently confessed Soviet spy during the Truman Administration), Adams nowhere discusses the need for an acceptable and efficacious anticommunism. Certainly we do not need more Joe McCarthys trampling the Constitution underfoot as they stage ersatz searches for subversion; if not hamstrung, the intelligence and law-enforcement communities can ferret out undercover agents quietly and legally. What America does need are principled, articulate, and popular spokesmen who can combat the omnipresent naiveté concerning communist intentions and tactics. In this regard, Adams's complacent relief that TV coverage of the Army-McCarthy hearings finally "exposed McCarthy in the flesh, without the distorting filter of headlines and self-serving press conferences and phony 'news events,'" must be reevaluated. In a time when photogenic and suave telejournalists slyly manipulate misleading 30-second snippets and contrived news-event interviews as they romanticize Central American and Palestinian terrorists, malign conservative politicians, and promote no-nuke neurosis, the danger posed by the media is without precedent. (BC) □

# From Diadem to Democracy

**Michael Packe: *King Edward III;*** Routledge & Kegan Paul; London.

**Denis Judd: *King George VI;*** Franklin Watts; New York.

At the close of the War of Independence, a group of officers proposed that George Washington become the first American king. Fortunately, Washington repudiated the very notion that anyone, himself included, should ever reign over the new United States as monarch. Nonetheless, the new republic that Washington actually did help create represented an extension of, rather than a radical break from, the British political tradition shaped during centuries of diminishing royal sovereignty. Indeed, by 1776 the Crown had already surrendered to Parliament most of its power over Britain as well as America. This surrender began, of course, when King John was forced by his vassals to put his seal to the Magna Charta in 1215. When Edward III ascended the



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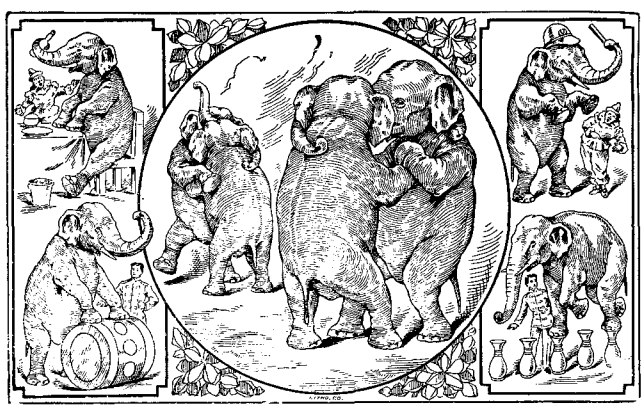
throne more than a century after John's death, the restrictions upon his governance were still slight. No senate hearings investigated or ever tried to restrain him when he repeatedly broke treaties, repudiated debts, circulated deceptive propaganda among his own people, manipulated his lords, seduced (perhaps raped) a noblewoman, permitted frightful mistreatment of French villagers, and sacrificed hundreds of his subjects' lives to his vainglorious foreign ambitions.

True, as he appears in Michael Packe's thorough and engrossing biography (published posthumously through the editorial efforts of L. C. B. Seaman), Edward III was a more evenhanded and admirable ruler than many of his duplicitous, capricious, and brutal predecessors and contemporaries. In a curious way, his accomplishment in strengthening the throne and in expanding his domain through military exploits ultimately even helped pave the way to English democracy. By successfully relying in battle not upon his mounted aristocrats but upon his yeoman archers, he gave the commoner a new sense of worth. "Edward," Packe observes, "had added something new to the political mix: a new spirit of self-respect among men whose status had hitherto required them to be mute."

By the time of George VI, in fact, this political mix had so evolved that the united voice of the majority, not the royal decree, decided Britain's political direction. It is common to refer to the 20th-century British crown as "merely symbolic." This entirely misses the point. Edward III wore a "merely symbolic" crown. George VI exercised virtually no direct political or military power precisely because his subjects did *not* view his crown as a symbol of the right to determine national policy. The ballot box has assumed this symbolic stature. Just the same, in his domestic virtues, in his personal triumph over a speech impediment, in his dignified response to the abdication crisis, and in his tireless encouragement to his war-battered subjects, George VI was a culturally potent symbol of national decency and resolve. He was, as Denis Judd styles him, "a people's king," hailed by his subjects with both the national anthem and "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

Judd's biography, though competent and readable, lacks the insight and analytical penetration of Packe's study. Though he does treat George VI's opposition to Soviet communism sympathetically, Judd's gratuitous apologies for the king's reservations about postwar socialization under Labour and for his alleged inability "to move with the times" as "new moral standards" arose are annoying. What this modern "people's king" sensed, as his biographer evidently does not, is that only economic freedom and morality anchored in tradition can offer any lasting defense against the onslaught of the neofeudal monarchs enthroned in the Kremlin. (BC) □



## Waste of Money

# Ambassador of Nothing

**Paul Theroux: *The London Embassy;*** Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Tolerance is a necessary virtue among fallible beings. Angels doubtless share the same firm convictions about what constitutes right thought and behavior and therefore (as that bit of nastiness with Lucifer showed) brook no dissent. Sublunar creatures, however, enjoy much less shared certainty concerning correct ideas and conduct. Consequently, a due respect for the autonomy of others and a requisite modesty in asserting our own beliefs requires that some allowance be made for views and acts differing from our own. Such tolerant allowance is especially indispensable for a Peace Corps worker and world traveler like Paul Theroux, an American who has spent much of his life in Africa, Asia, and Europe. As he has demonstrated in *The Great Railway Bazaar* and other nonfiction travel writing, Mr. Theroux rarely permits intolerance to come between him and attentive appreciation of the world's variegated cultures. However, in *The London Embassy* he makes it distressingly clear that his tolerance is tendentiously selective, governed by modish liberalism.

The fatuity of liberal tolerance, undetected by Mr. Theroux, derives from its being not a deferential margin around professed ethical convictions but rather a substitute *for* convictions. "Tolerance" accordingly becomes a euphemism for egalitarian amorality, a curiously closed-minded *in*tolerance toward all who champion communal values larger than the self. Thus the central figure in the collection of vignettes Mr. Theroux offers in *The London Embassy* is a senior American diplomat named Savage who fornicates randomly, smokes hashish casually, but becomes a livid preacher of righteousness at the slightest hint of racial prejudice or "sexism." Naturally, disdain for stereotypes does not prevent Mr. Theroux from depicting Tories as hidebound bigots, nor from portraying American authority figures as irrationally paranoid about international terrorism and incipient homosexuality. On the other hand the tender-but-tough feminism of Savage's half-Mexican lover (belatedly his wife) is presented with unrestrained sympathy, as is her passionate engagement in no-nukes activism. And while earnest America appears as the insidious corrupter of lovable British rambunctiousness, the relaxed "church-and-brothel society" of the Netherlands is portrayed as nearly utopian. Since American emissaries should represent favorably both our political system and our national ethos, one hopes that our London embassy will expatriate employees like Mr. Savage to the Dutch diplomatic corps and that Houghton Mifflin will send Mr. Theroux to Amsterdam with his next manuscript. (BC) □



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# Paying Dues and Eating Free Lunch

***Return of the Jedi;* Written by Lawrence Kasdan and George Lucas; Directed by Richard Marquand; 20th Century Fox.**

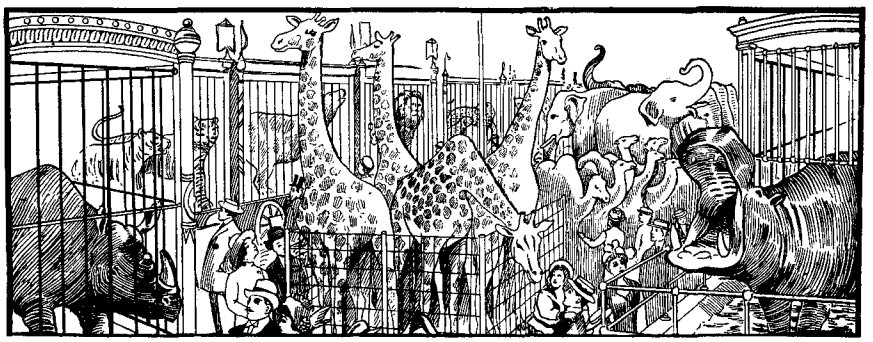
***The King of Comedy;* Written by Paul D. Zimmerman; Directed by Martin Scorsese; 20th Century Fox.**

**by Stephen Macaulay**

"Let's face it, we made a film for children." So said Mark Hamill, better known to millions as Luke Skywalker, to a reporter. This comment should be kept in mind by adults when considering *Return of the Jedi,* but it isn't. The reason why this is so is simple: adults know that it cost $32.5 million to produce *Jedi* and that there are 942 technical, special effects in the film. They cannot abide the idea that, to borrow a phrase, all of this should be wasted on the young. George Lucas's three *Star War* films—no matter what else they are—are simplistic. The center panel of his triptych, *The Empire Strikes Back,* indicates an attempt to make the cartoon characters appear more real, to blend the little dots that compose the images. But the result is, of course, far from satisfying for anything approaching a sophisticated point of view. That is, there still remain good guys in the form of the feisty rebels who fight for liberty and bad guys who support the totalitarian Empire. The clear distinction, however, is not purely white and black—not even a kid would buy that; the age of Walt Disney is past. Evil, as has been known since man became bipedal, has an allure. Good is often less appealing as its rewards are not immediately granted. Sir Galahad is really the most boring figure in Mallory; Launcelot, who sampled the fruit, is more of a success. Lucas, to his credit, gives cartoon Skywalker, the protagonist of the three films, feet of clay—evil tempts him: he seems to look away, but actually peers at it out of the corner of his eye. Any child who has been told "No, don't touch that!" or "Leave those cookies alone until *after* dinner!" knows what that situation is all about.

One other thing should be kept in mind. George Lucas is an adult, one who has proven himself to be a talented filmmaker. Although he reaps grand financial rewards for the *Star Wars* films and their fallout, he has undoubtedly experienced the lure to move to "the dark side of the Force," to make films that are considered, by the trendy know-nothings, "artistic successes" simply because they are morally ambivalent—or worse. The year that *The Empire Strikes Back* appeared, 1980, for example, Norman Mailer was hailed and awarded a Pulitzer Prize for what was deemed an "artistic" creation: an apologia for a murderer. Still, Lucas stayed his course (imagine how he, a technical virtuoso, could cinematically portray a slimy thug—with greater finesse than Mailer, I'll wager) and created yet another film, *Jedi,* that can inculcate the idea that evil may have its tangible benefits but that there is still something to be said for good in the minds of children —and in those of chronological adults who haven't learned that ancient lesson.

Martin Scorsese's *The King of Comedy* is, similarly, a cautionary tale, though one for adults. In this film, Scorsese concentrates on the debilitating effects of the desire for an empty image on a 34-year-old man. The goal is television stardom. The protagonist has seized upon a successful talk-show host/comedian as a model, one around which he builds his life. His life becomes a set with props and guests, not bona fide objects and family and friends (i.e., his mother is only heard, not seen; the woman who could be considered a "friend" is an equally psychotic individual whom he uses like a prop). In a sense, this is an old story, one that was told many times on the screen in the 30's and 40's. In those cases, a music publisher happened to overhear the hapless lead playing a piano or a theatrical producer chanced upon a Cinderella reciting the lines of a play while sweeping up backstage. Things, as Scorsese shows, are different in the 80's. No longer is it deemed necessary to *work* for the chance—to practice the scales, to learn the dialogue—it is thought to be *owed.* Chutzpah replaces sweat. What's more, the star-making machinery in this country—*Newsweek, People, ABC News* —promote this scheme. The unfunny, sleazy, would-be comic turns to a Federal crime as the way to get his "break." Cover stories, news reports, and a publishing contract take care of the rest. Undoubtedly, Scorsese learned this bitter lesson well: his 1976 *Taxi Driver* was blown up in the media to the benefit of John Hinkley. George Lucas, with his *Return of the Jedi,* says, in effect, "You've got to pay your dues." Martin Scorsese, with *The King of Comedy,* shows that a valueless society no longer has the word *dues* in its vocabulary. □





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# Bombs: Cinematic and Otherwise

***WarGames;* Written by Lawrence Lasker and Walter F. Parkes; Directed by John Badham; MGM/UA.**

Conservatives do not want to blow up large portions of real estate on this planet with thermonuclear devices. Conservatives do want to maintain traditional values, which they know is a wellnigh impossible task for people who are blinded, in constant pain, and who may glow in the dark. Similarly, liberals do not want to see the world turned into something resembling a charcoal briquette, if for no other reasons than the facts that they know (a) few, if any, would want to take a handout of scorched earth and (b) it would be hard to finance the infrastructure required to process the dole. However, liberals and those to their left fail to realize that while the American people can be convinced to freeze or otherwise refrigerate arms, their brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union can't even affect the official market price of pantyhose. To extrapolate from the status quo, it's easy to see that unilateral activities would result in a state wherein those Americans of a leftist persuasion would be as influential as a liquor salesman is in Salt Lake City today. These rather obvious observations are motivated by *WarGames.*

WarGames is presumably a message-movie about the current arms situation. *Presumably* because if I didn't know that it was accorded the influential wrap-up position at the Cannes Film Festival, I would simply dismiss it as an updated version of *Fail-Safe,* and not a very good one: a Grade B-minus movie. The film seizes upon the current rage among young people: home computers, their game-playing capabilities in particular. In the film, a high school student manages, through telephone lines, to hook up his home system with one that is in charge of firing all of the U.S. nuclear arsenal once the President gives the final command. Men used to turn the keys and push the buttons, but testing showed that 22% wouldn't. The machine would. What's more, the computer, which was previously used simply to play war games, is supposed to be able to target the bombs more effectively than Homo sapiens. A "glitch," to use computerese, develops: once the boy gets the big computer playing "Global Thermonuclear War," the machine starts playing for keeps. Eventually, the kid figures out what is happening while scientists and soldiers are unaware—naturally. Eventually, the world is saved—for a while.

Implausibilities—both technical and dramatic—mar the film. For the sake of argument, I'll accept that the teenager was able to get into line contact with the computer through his modem (modulator-demodulator, a device that permits computers to communicate with each other over phone lines). At one point, the Master Cylinder (to borrow an appropriate appellation from "Felix the Cat" cartoons, which have as much sociopolitical sense as *WarGames)* contacts the teen. On his video screen the boy can see two digital clocks: the Master Cylinder is providing data that show how long the "game" has been in process and how much time remains until The End. The frightened boy removes the telephone handset from the modem and rips the phone cord out of its socket for good measure. Still, the clocks remain on the screen—blip, blip, blip—which is something akin to taking a light bulb out of its socket and still getting lumens from it. There are undoubtedly more technical monstrosities in the film.

Characterization isn't much more deft. For example, Badham uses one of the oldest stereotypes: the wacky professor. The genius who programmed the Master Cylinder decided to drop out; he is first shown on an island in Oregon flying a radio-controlled pterodactyl. Technical geniuses that I've met progressed to more dull things—executive positions at Raytheon, for example—not to the edge of lunacy. Of course, those people are less dramatic and more plausible than

## LIBERAL CULTURE

***Andrei and Jane***

Recently, the leader of a tour of American ranchers through the Soviet Union, a Dr. Gary Browning, returned to the United States to offer some fresh observations on our unfair prejudices against the Soviet system. In particular he complained that Americans have misjudged Soviet treatment of dissidents. Explained this expert on Russian culture:

> Most Soviet citizens view their approximately 1,000 active dissidents much the same way the majority of Americans viewed Jane Fonda and others who went to North Viet Nam in the early 1970's.

Why are there only 1,000 active dissidents amidst a quarter of a billion people? Dr. Browning did not say. But we presume that if informed of his analogy the millions of *inactive* ones would jazzercise in their Siberian graves. □

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Badham's cartoon. The teen begs the man to come to the missile-command headquarters to, in a sense, pull the plug on the computer. The response is some sort of gibberish about the fate of the dinosaurs, which sounds as if it could have been written by Jonathan Schell. Finally, the man comes to what senses he has, etc.

So what is the point? The message presented on the screen—figuratively and literally (in computeresque alphanumeric characters)—is that there is no victor in a nuclear war. The implication for Badham is that some—politicians and military men, as opposed to teenage computer hackers and zany professors—think that victory is possible. That is nonsense. Certainly they—soldiers, in particular—know and understand what the consequences of nuclear war are. Many Americans, thanks to the vicious attacks on the military—some of which were presented on the screen—that occurred during the 60's, have forgotten that "peace-keeping soldier" is not an oxymoron. Fortunately, there are some in the present Administration who still understand that role, who are looking for sensible ways to keep thousands of deadly mushrooms from erupting. More fortunate is the fact that the ideas of Cannes-touted directors aren't reigning where it counts—but November 1984 is only months away. (SM) □

## LIBERAL CULTURE

### *Tripping the Light Fantastic*

After decades of unanimously denouncing the "bourgeois family" and applauding all movements subversive of its undergirding ethic, many leftist intellectuals are now currying respectability by denouncing homosexuality, drug abuse, and leisure lifestyles as "decadent" and "apolitical." The success of this effort, however, has been hampered by their erstwhile champions' refusal to be thus written off. For example, in a recent issue of *The Nation* we find associate editor Andrew Kopkind denouncing "the new cold war liberal consciousness" for trying to deny kinship with "the 'liberationist' politics" which fostered "feminism as well as the gay movement . . . dancing and drugs . . . street politics, communal life and the revolution of the spirit." He is seconded by a correspondent who identifies himself as "a commie queer who loves to dance" and who insists that "leftist heavies" should recognize that "the women's and gay movements are, indeed, political."

We agree with Mr. Kopkind and his supporter. We wonder, though, just what steps and to what music "commie queers" think they will be dancing if totalitarian leftists ever come to power and slam the door on that huge closet known as the gulag. They still are unable to grasp the fact that their only surefire shield in this world of insane alliances are the rednecks in the Marine Corps—the brutish defenders of the only social order that guarantees the survival of commie queers who do everything they can to subvert the very political system that protects them. □

# Cheap Trick

***Trading Places;* Written by Timothy Harris and Herschel Weingrod; Directed by John Landis; Paramount.**

Of Mark Twain's works, *The Prince and the Pauper* is one of the few that isn't readily identified in the popular mind with Twain, even though it, with *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* is more often portrayed in the cinema than, say, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.* The first filmed version of *The Prince and the Pauper* appeared in 1909. *Crossed Swords* (1978) was, perhaps, the last. *Trading Places* can be added to the chronological list. In terms of a qualitative ranking—well, the lead in *Crossed Swords* was played by the young man who had the title role in *Oliver!* in 1968; he was semicute in '68; puberty wasn't good to him. *Crossed Swords,* trifle though it is, is a more palatable—and sensible—movie than *Trading Places.* Subtlety is something foreign to John Landis—which isn't a remarkable observation, given the fact that it was he who directed *National Lampoon's Animal House* (1978), though one would hope that he would have undergone some adolescent development since then. Instead of twins, there are a white preppie and a black jivester who switch positions. That, presumably, is meant to be hilarious, the more so as the men playing the roles are widely touted as "comedic geniuses." There is a wide gulf between genius and an ability to tell jokes. The substitution of places is forced by two wealthy brothers, who are typical commodities brokers: uncharitable, unfeeling, tight, etc. This portrayal, I suspect, is supposed to be what now passes for some sort of Hollywood Brand of socialist realism, a suspicion bolstered by the fact that one of the brothers has a picture of Ronald Reagan at his side while the other has Richard Nixon, with Ike framed fuzzily in the background. Twain, skewer in hand, is undoubtedly waiting at whatever gate he's at for Messrs. Landis, Harris, and Weingrod. (SM) □



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# Letter from Washington: Politics & Culture

**by Edward J. Lynch**

Meridian House International, the Washington mansion selected by The Ingersoll Foundation and The Rockford Institute to unveil the T. S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing and the Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters, embodies many of the paradoxes central to the current decade. Located in a city of straight lines and ponderous style, Meridian House is a decorous, even graceful, edifice in a neighborhood a bit removed from the routine business of government. In a city where the dominant language is a gray bureaucratese directed mostly toward the nation's ills, the Latin inscription over Meridian House's doors announces, "Where happiness dwells, evil will not enter." Just as Meridian House is apart from governmental Washington, The Ingersoll Prizes reflect achievements of culture that inevitably remain apart from the government under which they take place.

Ingersoll Foundation President John Howard, announcing the awards, noted that many citizens, even those who have attended prominent colleges and universities, have not been introduced to the philosophical and religious thinking that constitutes the moral foundation of a free society. In the absence of this intellectual link to the moral foundation of human liberty, there are increasing claims to "rights" and a persistent erosion of a serious notion of human responsibility. Dr. Howard sees these awards as a reflection of the commitment of The Ingersoll Foundation and The Rockford Institute to "help people understand that the functioning of a free society depends upon the voluntary cooperation of members," that is, on citizens who voluntarily assent to the standards that constitute the foundations of freedom.

Rockford Institute Vice-President Leopold Tyrmand described the intellectual gap that these awards fill. Richard Weaver's first book was *Ideas Have Consequences,* in which he effectively denounced the notion that individuals are "really" governed by impersonal historical and/or material forces which are beyond common understanding, let alone control. Mr. Tyrmand surveyed the National Book Award winners of the past 15 years, recounting the mediocrities and intellectual flyweights who were rewarded for peddling the bizarre and the perverse. Conversely, to cite only one example, no National Book Award ever went to Leo Strauss, despite the fact that his intellectual accomplishments will endure far beyond the ephemera that appeared during the years that Strauss published.

The Eliot and Weaver awards were announced as Washington commenced yet another round of public discussions of the woes of modern education. The National Commission on Excellence in Education had recently issued its recommendations for educational progress. In keeping with the demands of political compromise, the Commission gave only the most general indication of its notions of excellence, effectively abdicating responsibility to define the goals being pursued even as it demanded greater resources to pursue them. In contrast to this aimless expression of political compromise, The Ingersoll Prizes provide precise examples of excellence—both in the choice of exemplars for whom they are named and, one presumes, in the selection of awardees—for those committed to serious defense of the intellectual tradition of human liberty.

Amid the hors d'oeuvres and canapés, people experienced in the political reflections of cultural trends welcomed the new awards. Reception hosts Rep. Lynn Martin (R-IL), Rep. James Leach (R-IA), Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), Edwin Feulner, president of the Heritage Foundation, and Robert Nisbet, professor emeritus from Columbia University, were joined by nearly a hundred guests. The education community, including Utah Supreme Court Justice and former Brigham Young University President Dallin Oaks, American Council on Education President Jack Peltason, Catholic University of America President Father William Byron, and Department of Education officials Wendy Borcherdt and Charles Heatherly each praised these

*Dr. Lynch is a free-lance writer.*

## In the Mail

***American Political Writing During The Founding Era, 1760-1805, Volumes I and II,* edited by Charles S. Hyneman and Donald S. Lutz; Liberty Press; Indianapolis, IN.** "Industry and Frugality are Virtues which have been buried out of Sight; 'tis Time, high time to revive them." So wrote Philo Publicus to the *Boston Gazette* in 1764. This outstanding collection, some 1300 pages in length, shows how little has been learned during the history of the country.

***A Joke Book for Job: The Story of I. & M. Ottenheimer, Publishers* by Michael Solomon; Top Hat Press; Baltimore, MD.** A book about a publisher of joke books, even written in the first-person form by a fan, isn't necessarily funny, even when the contents aren't necessarily factual. A case in point.

***The Darkness of God: Theology after Hiroshima* by Jim Garrison; Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.** The author states, "I shall be arguing that our inherited theistic notion of God is inadequate in a secular world 'come of age,' and that the doctrines of the *Summum Bonum* and the *privatio boni,* by which the church has dealt with the problem of evil, are unable to help Christianity cope realistically with the overwhelming power of evil confronting them." Presumably, notions like the New Testament go out the window in the nuclear age.



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new honors in American cultural life. Dr. William Bennett, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, captured the independent nature of the awards in his observation: "The first time I heard about these awards was when I received the invitation to this announcement party. No one asked the Endowment for a nickel, God bless you. And that's what it's all about. As a free society, we are glad to see lots of different people interested in cultural improvements. I'm delighted to see this."

The first recipients of these $15,000 prizes will be named in December 1983. □

# Letter from Florence:
## The Technocratic Temptation

**by Thomas Molnar**

The various institutions of the Common Market have been almost equally allocated to its member nations, with the founding Germans and French retaining the bulk. Italy was a kind of Johnny-come-lately, emerging after the economic and legal bureaucracies were already in place, but it was only natural to allocate the Common Market's cultural institutions to the country of Dante and Michelangelo. Thus, the European University Institute (EUI) was established near Florence in an old abbey where the Platonic Academy held its sessions under Lorenzo and Cosimo Medici.

The University, unique in that it is financed by the European Parliament (i.e., by the 10 participating governments), is nevertheless autonomous, with a Principal—currently Dr. Mayhofer, Germany's former minister of justice and a liberal—who is the liaison man between the faculty and the commission that allocates funds. And here some paradoxes are immediately evident. The EUI is located among the Tuscan hills; one can see Florence not more than 10 miles away; in another direction is the Guicciardini summer residence and the villa I Tatti—where Bernard Berenson, dean of art historians, held forth for decades surrounded by magnificent gardens and priceless works of art. Such a milieu would naturally attract students of liberal arts, devoting themselves to Plato or the Etruscans, to Machiavelli (whose study room is almost intact since the moment he stopped tormenting Europe's, at the time still Christian, conscience), or to the myriad aspects of the Renaissance, all available for reflection and admiration in the city of Dante, Leonardo, and Galileo. And the students do come, 120 at present (later the 200-student limit will be reached), living in Florence on a modest stipend from their respective governments. All are postgraduate scholars, many of whom have already-known names. As a lecturer for a week in May, I had the opportunity to admire the range of their knowledge and interest, to read their papers, to talk with them about Rousseau's concept of nature, Grotius's Aristotelian roots, and the concept of war and peace throughout the ages.

The question is: do the hurried Euro-bureaucrats who finance this University have a real appreciation of such studies —beyond mere lip service? Or are they inclined to demand "efficiency" from all "European" institutions, hoping, tacitly at least, that the EUI would devote itself to the cause of Continental integration? The latter objective would mean that legal, economic, and political projects would be stressed over the so-called cultural ones; everything that promotes integration (homogenization?) brings smiles to the European technocrats' faces, and anything not so "useful" endangers the dossier presented by the Principal.

Such problems are common wherever university curriculum depends largely on the *bon plaisir* of government officials or boards of trustees. In the case of Florence, the bureaucratic management must be multiplied by 10 (the number of Common Market member governments); then, the invisible tentacles emerging from the Brussels headquarters must be added. The sum is staggering. True, the EUI is still young, founded in 1976, and the professors, all of them temporary and untenured, may be able to fight the trend toward technocratization. But human nature being what it is, some, the majority, prefer to accommodate the administration; only a minority tries to increase the number of courses such as history, philosophy, art, religion, etc. Hence the clashes which divide the faculty, their student supporters, and certain members of the staff. So far, the administration understands how to profit by such divisions, which emphasize the obvious fragility of the institution, giving it an air of provisionality—in a city that impresses one with its age and permanence.

Here is one example of a major issue involved in determining the course that this university is likely to take. Quite by

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accident, while I conversed with one of the chief administrators, an English lady, she mentioned that at present the faculty council encourages studies concerning the North/South relations in Europe. Since we had just touched upon the delicate subject of the "empirical bent" that the university is gradually adopting—by the force of circumstances—it was not hard for me to guess what my interlocutor might mean by "North/South relations." But I pretended innocence, suggesting that she no doubt meant the cross influence of Italian and Flemish painters during the Renaissance. After all, the conversation took place near Florence, and the sunny skies permitted us a glimpse of the Uffizzi, where, despite the abundance of Italian painters, the works of the Flemish are also well represented. What could be a more appropriate study in this environment than the admiring pilgrimages, in both senses of the term, that Northerners took to learn from ancients and moderns in Rome, Venice, and Florence?

No, I was told, the aim of the undertaking is to examine and possibly suggest corrections for the imbalance that has traditionally existed between the industrial North of Europe (or for that matter of Italy itself) and the agricultural, more underdeveloped southern parts. It is, then, a university conceived as an intellectual laboratory for political objectives; if this trend persists, unchecked by the university teaching staff, then we may eventually see studies undertaken in the "interest of European integration" such as disarmament, cold war, relations with the Third World, and others. Worthy topics perhaps, but not for a university, and not in Florence. Especially not since the students are not undergraduates or even graduates, but *scholars*—not future administrators, bureaucrats, experts, ideologues, politicians.

The seminar organized for Professor Janine Chanteur (philosophy, Sorbonne) and me dealt with the city *(polis, civitas),* its self-image, its relationship to peace and war. We commented on each other's lectures, then opened up the seminar for discussion. The participants immediately went to the core of the matter. My concept of nature was questioned by a young Italian, and Mme. Chanteur's treatment of Hobbes was criticized by a young lady, also from Italy, but with a Greek background. These were not the usual queries for further information, but different views, well-grounded and presented as counterpositions. Professor Maurice Cranston of England, a frequent lecturer at the EUI, assured us that all the classes—in reality research seminars—are of this caliber. The selection of candidates for admission is, of course, very careful, but the genius loci is certainly not foreign to the brilliant expectations and achievements. It would be a great pity if EUI were to be tracked into a different, more empirical, more utilitarian course, to end up with a university that is little more than a sociological workshop.

* * *

The European University Institute is the second of such foundations, the first having functioned on an undergraduate level in Bruges, also a well-chosen site. The College of Europe, however, soon turned into a laboratory for integration, exactly the danger that the EUI, at least officially, wishes to avoid. Assuming that it does escape that pitfall, will it then expand in other directions, giving birth to similar institutions, accepting students from other parts of the world? More importantly, will it be tempted to seek cultural integration with Eastern European nations? Plans have simply not evolved enough to tell yet. One gets the impression that the founders merely launched the university without giving much

## LIBERAL CULTURE

***Big Sister***

Among many, one of the most noxious marks of today's New York City is a radio call-in show conducted by one Ms. Ruth Westheimer and entitled "Sexually Speaking." *Chicago Tribune* calls Ms. Westheimer a "psychologist who specializes in human sexual behavior." We have some doubts about that. Here is an example of her psychological acumen and overall "humanness":

Q—Is there a key to good sex?

A—Planning is one . . .

We have an uncanny feeling that, actually, instead of individual "planning" Ms. Westheimer means "programming." Some kind of teledevice could be installed in every New York bedroom through which Ms. Westheimer could supervise every performing couple and instruct them on what to do next—according to plan. Walkman-type earphones might prove even handier. "She gets 3,000 to 4,000 calls an hour," gloats the *Chicago Tribune.* We now know why New York is often referred to as Gotham. □

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thought to the possible and desirable lines of development. Somehow, the Common Market is not able to provide the solid foundation that the Church once did for the medieval universities. It does not have a central idea, a coordination of human endeavors under a transcendental reality; it does not even have the vision of a cultural synthesis. It tries to accommodate pluralism, to copy in some undefined respect the American model, and generally to be all things to all men. It is also tied, in spite of its autonomy, to the vicissitudes of the "European idea."

These difficulties may yet be turned into its advantages. For the moment, the Florentine location is, if anything, oppressive. The great city by the Arno, absolutely unchanged—even by the disastrous flood in the early 70's—since I last saw it 15 years ago, is a contradiction to the foundation of a "European" institution with cultural pretensions. Florence and surrounding Tuscany speak of permanence. Even its social structure has remained almost intact: the great houses of great families who felt humiliated when Maria-Theresa granted them noble titles (they had considered themselves aristocratic simply *because* they were Florentine) still run the city—along with the Communist Party and some exceptional men of bourgeois origins, one of whom was mayor when the flood struck. All—together—saved Florence then. I say *together* because the little people are most adamant about preserving its beauty and taste.

The EUI represents a new Europe grafted onto the old. The dialogue between them has scarcely begun. □

## POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

# Arnold Schoenberg: An Alternate View

**by Theo. M. Penker III**

The name of Arnold Schoenberg evokes reactions from both professional musician and general concertgoer that range from near-irrational, venomous hatred to "that old fogy," to conditional acceptance to blind adulation. These reactions are cross-cultural. The condemnation of Schoenberg's music as "hideous and feeble" or "a masterfully contrived thing of horror" by the music critic of *The Nation* could as easily have been written by an ultraconservative. More than a century ago Richard Wagner was the target of much the same combination of condemnation and adulation. Unfortunately, Schoenberg had no King Ludwig to champion him against his detractors.

*Dr. Penker works for the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Cincinnati.*

A comparison to Wagner is not really farfetched. For it is in the soil of Wagnerian chromaticism that the musical language of Schoenberg germinated, although it was fertilized by many other influences: from Mahler, Bruckner, and Brahms through Beethoven and Haydn to Bach and back yet further to late Medieval and early Renaissance musicians. Strangely, Schoenberg was also an admirer of American jazz; a fact he admitted in an interview with Erwin Stein in 1928. It should come as no surprise, then, to learn that he became quite friendly with Oscar Levant and George Gershwin, whose music he held in high esteem, when he settled in Los Angeles. The influence of jazz can be detected, fleetingly, in *Variations for Orchestra* (1928). This, Schoenberg's first composition for orchestra in the strict and fully developed twelve-tone system, makes use of jazz elements in the syncopated rhythms. There are also brief stretches that foreshadow some of the progressive jazz works of Stan Kenton. Even his opera *Von Heute auf Morgen,* (1930) shows decided jazz influences in the orchestral use of saxophones and the already-mentioned use of syncopation. Combined with this and the "infamous" tone-row are flashes of Viennese operetta. These are, no doubt, reminders of his early days (prior to World War I) when he orchestrated or copied parts for operettas to earn a living.

During these early days—to some extent symbolically portrayed in his opera *Die Glückliche Hand*—Schoenberg composed the music that seems to be most easily accepted by the general concertgoer and a number of critics. Despite their present acceptance, much of this music, so definitely in the Austro-German Romantic tradition, was initially received with as little grace as his dodecaphonic compositions. *Verklaerte Nacht,* a lovely romantic work with clear links to the Wagner-Mahler ambience, was hissed at its premiere. The later string-orchestra version (which fleshed out what some considered the starkness of the sextet original) fared much better. It is now approaching the status of a concert standard —one of the few works that those who have been misled into believing Schoenberg a harsh, difficult, nonmelodic composer will accept without shuddering. His other orchestral composition of this period, the tone poem *Pelleas and Melisande,* given the structure of a four-movement symphony to express moods and characters in formulated units and presenting the three main characters in the manner of Wagnerian leitmotivs, did not fare too well at its premiere either.

It was at this time that the massive symphonic oratorio/song-cycle *Gurrelieder* had its inception. One of his few compositions to receive immediate acceptance, it was begun by Schoenberg in 1901 but not completed until 1911 and is, therefore, the product of two creative periods. The earlier sections comprise a "document of late romanticism carried to such a pitch that there was no possibility of future develop-



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ment," as K. H. Ruppel commented. The conclusion shows signs of the "pan-tonal" world of composition, particularly in the handling of orchestral textures and the use of *Sprechstimme,* which Schoenberg had already begun to use. The quiet opening of *Gurrelieder,* a heritage from Wagner and Bruckner, is a characteristic that appears frequently in Schoenberg's pan-tonal/expressionist and dodecaphonic music.

The *Five Pieces for Orchestra,* despite its pan-tonality—that is, "a synthesis of all tonalities"—contains sections of beautiful "impressionistic" tone painting. Particularly to be noted is the third section, "Summer Morning," which Schoenberg admitted was an attempt to musically depict "sunlight on the water of Lake Traunsee." This lovely music, still derided by some, was given its first performance at a "Prom" Concert—the Edwardian equivalent of our "Pops"—by Sir Henry Wood in 1912.

As in Wagner, the Mono-Drama for soprano and orchestra *Ewartung* blends recitative and song in continuous melody and depends on motival development. This pan-tonal one-act opera is an intensified version of the *Liebestod* episode from *Tristan.* Musically, the romantic element is most evident toward the end in the horn solo and the evocation of the coming of dawn. It was the coming of dawn which betrayed Tristan and Isolde, just as it betrays The Woman as she discovers the body of her dead lover. In both instances the coming of dawn is the harbinger of death.

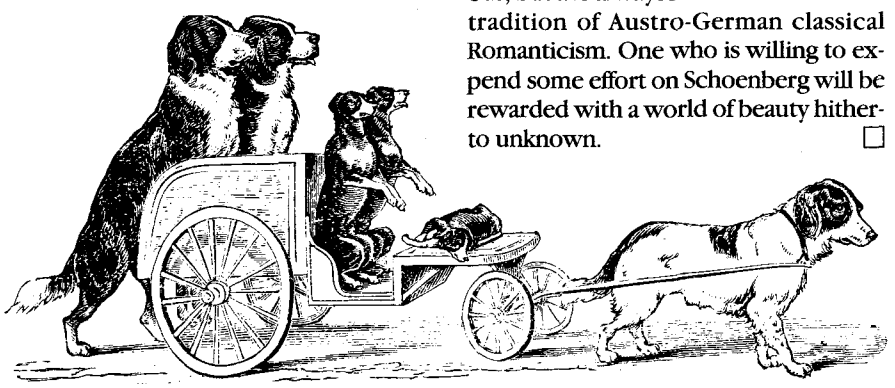
It is with his truly "twelve-tone" *Music* that the most difficulties arise. If a Schoenbergian composition of this period is to be appreciated, it must be remembered that the "tone row" is merely a tool, like the C-major scale, with which to create *Music;* that *Music* is the intended result of the use of either tool. Schoenberg said he wrote "twelve-tone *Music,* not *twelve-tone* music." Indifferent, pedantic, dull music has been written in C major as well as by those who use the dodecaphonic system.

For a great many individuals the music created by Schoenberg during the last third of his life is to be avoided as if it were some loathsome disease. They see no beauty, merely harsh, barbaric noise devoid of melody. But the singing melody for solo violin that begins the first movement of the *Violin Concerto* is certainly not just noise. The concerto does have difficult sections for the first-time listener, as do many fine pieces of music. But on repeated hearings difficulties initially encountered disappear, and the logic and beauty of the concerto become apparent. Incidentally, Stravinsky considered this concerto the greatest written to date for the violin. Not a small compliment considering the quality of that composer's own *Violin Concerto.*

Nor is there any lack of melody in the *Variations for Orchestra.* The beautiful crescendo-diminuendo dedicatory preface with its B-A-C-H motive is followed by the introduction of the romantic theme, long and lyrical and very simply stated by the cellos, then taken over by the violins. The variations themselves range from Germanic earthy, sometimes sarcastic, humor to a waltz, alternating between use of full orchestra and small chamber-music combinations. After this composition, which he considered to be one of the works that crystallized the twelve-tone system, Schoenberg felt no need to restrict himself to that method in composing. He freely returned to writing tonal music, such as in the *Cello Concerto,* with its "Rule Brittania" first movement, and the *Suite in G* for strings; sometimes he combined tonal and dodecaphonic elements in the same work. Mention must be made of Schoenberg's many choral works that indicate his knowledge and love of Medieval music. *Es Ist Zu Dumm* (1934), if performed without comment, could be taken as a work of the Swingle Singers.

His return to music of a tonal nature was not a rejection of the dodecaphonic system. Schoenberg had always considered tonal music a valid means of expression for a given work. In creating the twelve-tone system he merely gave composers another option for expressing their musical ideas. When teaching, Schoenberg intended "to give [his students] instructions in counterpoint, harmony and chorale," as Oscar Levant wrote. Many of these students "were sorely disappointed when they discovered that . . . they would have to expend considerable effort themselves" when all they wanted was a short course in learning "a handful of Schoenberg's tricks."

Similarly it requires "effort" when first listening to the music of Schoenberg. This is also true of one's first encounters with Beethoven, Bruckner, and Mahler. If an individual goes to a concert merely to "sound bathe" and not to make use of the mind, that individual will miss an enormous amount of beauty. So it is with the music of Schoenberg, whether of the early Wagner-Bruckner-Mahler period, the pan-tonal compositions, the severely serial music, or those works that combine dodecaphonic and tonal methods, but are always *Music* written in the tradition of Austro-German classical Romanticism. One who is willing to expend some effort on Schoenberg will be rewarded with a world of beauty hitherto unknown. □





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## Music

# History?

Two lush albums full of jazz trivia and an occasional forgotten morsel of jazz *gourmandise.* Why Blue Angel Imports (together with the West German firm Musical Distributors) calls them *The History of Jazz* is difficult to figure out. Together they form a product of eclectic preferences, disheveled sentiments, random nostalgia. Nothing is covered chronologically; there is no methodology in sight. They feature nothing beyond the swing era, and a "history" of that period without King Oliver, Fletcher Henderson, Bunk Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis, or Coleman Hawkins —to name only a few—is not even a chronicle. Listening to Harry James's tremolos in "Ciribirin" may be amusing, but it is also somehow humiliating—when it is offered under the heading *History of Jazz.* And why Hoagy Carmichael's "Orchestra" is present while Jimmy Lunceford is absent is a mystery almost beyond explanation.

Yet there are lovely serendipities here and there: Bing Crosby "jazzing" it with the Mills Brothers may not be the ultimate artistic satisfaction, but it shows with flair how syncopation and black musicality affected the larger, albeit shallow, expanses of mass entertainment and left indelible marks on the landscape of the national culture. □

## Journalism

# Newspeak from Wall Street

In 1948, nearing the close of his career as one of the 20th century's most perceptive literary and political writers, George Orwell completed *1984*, his cautionary vision of a totalitarian future. In 1983, on the eve of the year Orwell anticipated, countless American journalists and commentators are trying to evaluate the current relevance of this masterpiece. Joining in this effort, the *Wall Steet Journal* recently engaged the services of one John J. Fialka. The editors of the *Wall Street Journal* naturally profess allegiance to the Western tradition of freedom which has made possible both the development of American business and the distribution of their own publication. Yet where do Mr. Fialka and his employers find the threat of Big Brother most menacing? Not in Russia, where Orwell's book is banned and his name is vilified by Soviet propagandists. Not in Poland, where underground newsletters are suppressed by brutal secret police. Not in Cuba, where dissenters languish in jails while the masses are taught to chant slogans. Not in Nicaragua, where moderates are murdered as the ruling junta speaks of "justifiable excesses." No. The pundits of Wall Street have discovered this horrid threat in the country where more than 10 million copies of Orwell's novel have been sold. They have discovered it in a land where *1984* is required reading of high school and college students. They find it in the nation where they themselves publish their pages and where 99% of their readers read them. They have found it in the United States of America.

Because Americans use computers, mass-communication systems, electronic burglar alarms, and video displays (like the ones *WSJ* advertises for phenomenal fees), they are judged to have made Orwell's frightening vision a near reality. So say Walter Cronkite, National Public Radio, and numerous university professors surveyed by Mr. Fialka. Had they bothered to check Orwell's own explanation of his book, the *WSJ* editors might have wielded a judicious blue pencil against such nonsense. Wrote Orwell:

> My recent novel is . . . a show-up of the perversions to which a centralised economy is liable and which have already been partly realized in Communism and Fascism. I do not believe that the kind of society I describe *will* arrive, but I believe that something resembling it *could* arrive. . . . Totalitarianism, *if not fought against,* could triumph anywhere.

Western resolve destroyed fascism 30 years ago, but communism remains a virulent and relentless foe. Why then does *WSJ* interpret Orwell's work not as a warning against Soviet encroachment but as an indictment of American technology? The reason was best expressed by Neil Postman, a maverick professor who refused to join the hate-America chorus organized by Mr. Fialka. According to this lonely voice of reason, people who search for Big Brother in America "are looking in the wrong place":

> Nothing like that has happened here . . . It's something else that's happening, something much stranger.

But when the perverse inanity of all the Fialkas around has completely replaced commonsense patriotism with paralytic self-loathing, then Americans will finally cease the fight that Orwell urged against communist totalitarianism. Then the Kremlin can replace the editorial offices of Dow Jones & Company with a field subsidiary of the Ministry of Truth and escort to the Ministry of Love all the bewildered Fialkas—who never learn from history and fact and who therefore will never understand Orwell's message.

Of course, a Fialka or two do not make much difference, but one Walter Cronkite



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does. He hosted a much-ballyhooed CBS program devoted to Orwell's vision. Cronkite's inquiry emphasized the most recent instances of torture, brainwashing, and technological surveillance of citizens by the state, society, and some less clearly defined but equally sinister forces. He thinks that Orwell predicted just that, and Walter Cronkite, he presumes, is the supreme and infallible interpreter of those predictions. Naturally, he inspects most intensely Chile and South Africa, exemplifying institutionalized inhumanity with the poky regimes of El Salvador and pre-1975 South Vietnam and saying little about any others. He avoids geographical denominations, but the images on the TV screen speak for themselves, and—as even Mr. Cronkite is unable to obtain pictures of the injections given in a Soviet mental hospital, or of a gulag torture chamber in Kamchatka—the impression conveyed to his viewers is unambiguous. Naturally, it is this kind of perversion of truth and corruption of the ordinary consciousness that Orwell had in mind when he wrote *1984*. As a result of this vile sociocultural mechanism, Mr. Cronkite, the embodiment of the elaborate system of lying through editorial "omissions" that came to be accepted as the paragon of truth, becomes the most "trusted" man in America. Thus, incredible as it may sound to him, he is wasting his time looking for Big Brother in South Korea, Argentina, or among the multinational corporations. All he has to do is look in the mirror. □

## Abracadabra

In a recent article denouncing the Reagan Administration's opposition to Cuban activities in Grenada, *The Nation* lauded the Cubans for their work in building an airfield (suitable for use by MIG's) and for their professed commitment "to helping the Grenadians" in other fields. As proof positive of Cuban goodwill, *The Nation* observes that the communists have:

> even supplied two magicians, who turn up regularly at concerts, rallies and other affairs; though their tricks are rather corny, they delight the Grenadians, an ingenuous people.

We agree. The Grenadians will need all the magic belonging to the com-

*continued on page 48*

### In the Mail

***A Stolen Biography*** **by Szymon Szechter; Nina Karsov; London, England.** A delightful satire about life in Eastern Europe conveyed in a deadpan style.

***Contours of a World View*** **by Arthur F. Holmes; Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.** The world view of the title is Christian; the author hopes that it can overcome the naturalistic humanism that he thinks has made a mess of things. Amen.

***Mapping the Mind*** **by Hunter B. Shirley; Nelson-Hall; Chicago.** Curious cartography for cognition.

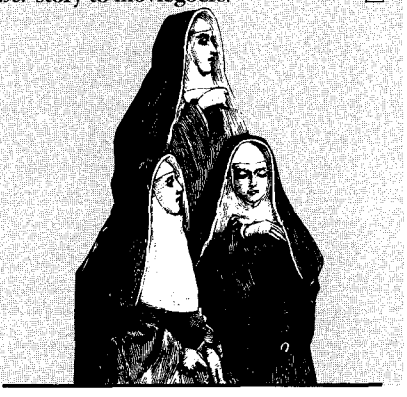
***Psychology's Occult Doubles: Psychology and the Problem of Pseudoscience*** **by Thomas Hardy Leahey and Grace Evans Leahey; Nelson-Hall; Chicago.** Phrenology, mesmerism, Dianetics, and other highfalutin practices brought down to size: subminiature.

***The Tares and the Good Grain*** **by Tage Lindbom; Mercer University Press; Macon, GA.** A former Swedish socialist explains that the moral malaise debilitating modern man cannot be cured through government regulatory activities, a concept which, of course, makes him something of an outcast in his country.

## Liberal Culture

### *Amen*

Throughout the Renaissance, artists proved that religious themes—the suffering of St. Sebastian, the serenity of the Virgin Mary—are powerful mediums for artistic representation. Hollywood filmmakers, many of whom consider themselves to be infused with the spirit of Leonardo, never stop proving the enormity of their pygmyism. They have, for the most part, shied away from religious themes or simply botched them. Certainly there was *The Song of Bernadette* in 1943, but since then it has been all downhill: a few biblical epics, Hedy Lamarr as Joan of Arc in 1957, the swinging *Jesus Christ, Superstar* in 1973. Most of their efforts seem like updated tests for Job. Casting about for another subject, filmmakers recently hit upon a former Sister of Mercy in Michigan, one Agnes Mansour. Ms. Mansour left the order because the Church demanded that she resign her post as head of the state's Department of Social Services. Not only did the archbishop cite the papal order about the separation of Church and state, but there was the additional rub that the state agency provides financing for abortions. This story has everything: papal machinations, an oppressed woman, sex, etc. Naturally, Ms. Mansour received offers for movie rights to her saga, three offers at last count. Strange, but we have never heard of an American nun who struggled victoriously *against* the temptations to become a liberal icon and who received an offer to tell *her* story to moviegoers. □





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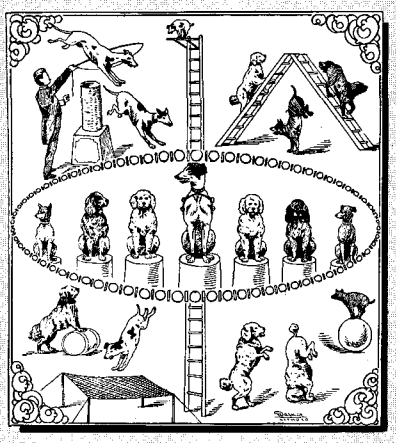
## Liberal Culture

### *Demirep Feminism*

Most people regard *Ms.* magazine as the journalistic vanguard of the feminist movement. Christie Hefner, a member of two advisory boards of the National Organization for Women, sees things differently. Recently she opined that the magazine her father founded, *Playboy,* deserves the credit for leading the way to emancipation for women because it began "the rebellion of men to the same family constraints that women are rebelling against now." *Playboy* has thus helped, Ms. Hefner explained, to create a new context for sexuality:

> Intercourse between men and women no longer means only getting laid. It reflects a whole range of professional and personal activities.

Examination of the treatment of females in the Hefner periodical reveals (among other things) that those pioneering this new "range of professional activities" still wear the uniform of the world's oldest profession. □



*continued from page 46*

munist practitioners of legerdemain. Any wand will help when democracy and judicial rights disappear and totalitarianism is installed. We have no doubt that the editors of *The Nation* will enjoy the show and cheer loudly. □

## Strangling Signifiers

We have always known TV talk-show host Phil Donahue to be a number of things, many of which politeness prevents us from publishing. However, until recently we were not aware that the silver fox of the feminist movement happens to be a leading semanticist. Donahue had interviewed a man who had illegally taken his son away from his mother; the mother was the legal guardian of the child. The mother, naturally, was interested in the whereabouts of her son, so she asked Donahue for information. He and his production company refused to help her. She sued. A Federal jury agreed with the woman and ruled that she was due $5.9 million in damages. According to our copy of *Webster's, kidnap* means to "seize and detain or carry away by unlawful force or fraud." During a recent newspaper interview, Donahue was asked whether his actions didn't condone the kidnap of the child. Donahue replied:

> The use of the word kidnap is not accurate, however you may feel about a non-custodial parent stealing his own child . . . . It is not kidnapping.

Asked what it *is,* Donahue opined, "We aren't sure what to call it. Maybe child snatching is the preferred term."

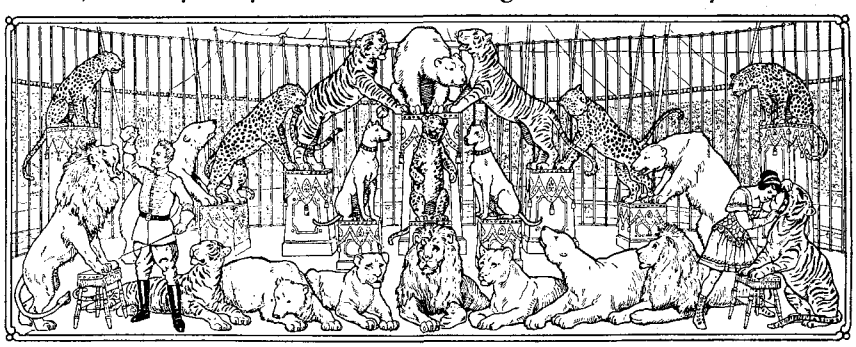
Someone should get Mr. Donahue acquainted with the English language, the more so as he is paid thousands of dollars a year to use it. To steal, in most civilized discourse, means to wrongfully seize something. A snatch, in the language of the streets, which we would think Donahue would be familiar with as dictionaries don't seem to be within his purview, is a kidnapping. Twist and squirm as he may, Donahue can't make wrong mean right, perpetrate a fraud. *Fraud* is a very applicable word in this context: its accepted definition is "intentional perversion of the truth . . . an act of deceiving or misrepresenting . . . one who is not what he pretends to be." The last of the three may come in handy for Donahue when filling out forms, in the space for "Occupation." □

## Erudition

Here is a phrase penned by one Bill Granger, a *Chicago Tribune* star columnist; besides the subject information it provides some unusual perceptions:

> Football is marching abroad, and we are going to bring it to Europe just the way we brought democracy there in the 40's.

We feel a little uneasy. We always thought that democracy was born in





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Athens, GR (Greece, we fail to remember the zip code), and was tested in some states (parts?) of the European Union at least a millennium ago. What we call football is, to our knowledge, an American version of a game that originated in 1823 in Rugby, England, but allegedly was known in France and Italy even in the Middle Ages. Someone told us that the same Mr. Granger, a feuilletonist quite representative of the *Chicago Tribune's* level of intelligence, once wrote a column in which he explained that Paris is barbaric because he couldn't find a men's room that was accessible to tourists there. In Paris, of all places? In the city where there are little establishments on every street corner known as *pissotièrres?* What a strange case of diuretic myopia . . . □

## Mourning

What do our centers of edification, like *Time* magazine, mourn? We quote:

> Antagonism between the President and the press corps has been at its lowest level in 20 years. The civility has been welcome, but has the public interest been served?

Translated into the language of commonsensical suspicion, it means: the public interest is best served when the press hates a President, maligns him, lies about him in order to do him in, seethes with mindless rage. Who needs civility? But *Time* is thorough in its despair; it quotes Mr. Jody Powell, the Carterian philosopher of power, complaining:

> 'Most reporters I talk to say they generally sort of like the guy.'

Of course, if Reagan were loathed, life would be much richer and the republic better off. *Time* adds to Mr. Powell's remarks: "Nonetheless they [the reporters] feel used." By whom, and why? Because they are unable to execrate and abhor? What an elevated ethical principle. . . □

### *Differences*

It looks as if the first salvos of the 1984 Presidential campaign have been fired. The issue on which the political adversaries are supposed to differ is public education. So far, the two prospective Presidential candidates' commentary on that subject has proved only how low the quality of public discourse in America has sunk.

The simple factuality that tells us what a professional morass and social disgrace public education has become needs no White House Commissions or congressional debates: it can be learned from tabloids and police precinct reports. President Reagan puts the blame on the teachers, their lack of skills, their moral apathy, and their self-serving, callous unionism. Mr. Mondale, the Democratic front-runner, believes that an appropriation of $11 billion to do more of what education is already doing—that is, hire even more "socially committed" teachers —will solve the problem. He seems quite unaware of the fact that the systematic and wanton destruction of human and civic commitments, which he and other left-liberal theorists have been urging upon the society since the mid-1960's, has actually been accomplished in our educational system. Neither statesman has mentioned that it is the collapse of the formative principle—which for two centuries was the marrow of American schooling but which crumbled in the 1970's under the ferocious reforms engineered by the liberal bureaucracies —that is the source of our social catastrophe. Until then, the goal of American education was the formation of enlightened, responsible, decent citizens. Now, however, teenagers in high school are asked to *choose* between decency and instincts, learning and "social conscience," responsibility and the pursuit of pleasurable bestiality. This instructional arrangement is supposed to emphasize the idea of progress. Its result is

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a generation lavishly laced with illiteracy, mindlessness, and a frightening vacuity of impulses, whose plagues of drugs and teenage pregnancies threaten its ability to perform the most rudimentary social duties. This generation is being reared on ugly and false educative directives: for example, that politicized demagoguery is of higher moral worth than profound respect for another human being, or that shapeless indulgence in every propensity is healthier than civilized conduct, or that any authority, regardless of its source and proven value, should be challenged. Before we ask what to do with morally sterile teachers, the problem of what *should* be taught in order to shape a humane, intelligent, fair-minded American citizen must be answered—that sort of citizen who knows who James Madison was, does not think algebra is a shampoo, can construct a coherent written sentence, understands the word "integrity," and freely accepts both civic rights *and* civil obligations. In short, the kind of American that our educational system attempted to mold for the last two centuries—until the National Education Association eagerly agreed to adopt the rock-music ethos as their archprinciple for teaching in American schools. □

### *Sex by S. Court*

The Supreme Court has once again come up with a ruling on abortion and sexual conduct of minors that has a seemingly wise and humanitarian gloss, but which ultimately—a century, or perhaps just a decade from now—will be assessed as a pompous exercise in devastating expediency. The high court reaffirmed that the right to privacy could be interpreted as allowing teenagers to terminate pregnancies without informing their parents. In other words, it made premature sexual adventurism a matter between the adolescent—often no older than 12—and the government, effectively eliminating any consideration of the family ethos. A tax-supported clinic will perform discreet abortions on demand, and a fine enlargement of constitutional freedom and the rights of the individual will thereby be achieved. The rationale behind this decision is probably simple practicality: the plague of juvenile pregnancies and unwanted babies is engulfing the nation. Planned Parenthood, with its infrastructural doctrinaire stupidity that sees orthodox social engineering as panacea for all human miseries, still preaches —after decades of proof to the contrary —that routinizing sexual dilemmas is the same as solving them.

The Supreme Court has apparently bought this argument, and, in doing so, demonstrated its ignorance of the susceptibility of youth to the pressures of cultural degeneracy—which are so obvious on every newsstand and in every movie theater. Messrs. Supreme Justices certainly are well acquainted with constitutional lore. Whether they know enough about the propensities that determine an adolescent female's fate in an environment where KISS, *Hustler,* and Masters & Johnson set the tone for a *facon d'être* is quite doubtful. The court's delicate adumbration of woman's rights will be taken by millions as a nod of the state's approval of mindless promiscuity. It will create a new generation of hollow, soulless women, who—after a series of abortions even before their factual or legal maturity—will be unable to distinguish what's worth living for at the age of 20. And the nation won't even have the opportunity to express its gratitude to Messrs. Brennan, Powell, Blackmun, et al., for by the time those empty-eyed women populate our streets, the humane justices will be in peaceful graves, just cursed memories. □

## LIBERAL CULTURE

### *Integrity*

*Village Voice*, the organ of the equal-rights-to-all-human-orifices movement, ran a character assassination piece (its house *gourmandise)* on Judge William Clark, Mr. Reagan's national security adviser. In it, Mr. Clark became—by *Village Voice's* fiat—guilty of every possible skulduggery, sin, abomination, fraud, lie, and atrocity as a person, a lawyer, a politician, a citizen, and a California Supreme Court justice. The testimony to the last iniquity is given by a former California Chief Justice, one Donald Wright.

> In a little-noticed moment in Clark's Senate confirmation hearing in 1981, Clark was asked if he ever had outside help in writing a court opinion. He said he had not. Chief Justice Wright told me he believes that statement, made under oath, was not true. After the Senate confirmation hearing, I asked Wright if he still believed Clark ever had someone outside the court write an opinion for him. 'Yes,' he responded, 'I believe he did. . . . It was my strong feeling that someone outside the court wrote that opinion. . . . I didn't like it. I was very upset. . . . I never knew it for certain, but I believed it to be the case.'

*VV* describes Mr. Wright as "a widely respected chief justice . . . and a Republican." We have difficulties even seeing him as a lawyer, let alone a "chief justice." What should one think of a professional member of the judiciary who casts the ultimate aspersion on the basis that "I never knew it for certain, but I believed it to be the case"? □



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